EDUCATION ISSUE

COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

April 21, 2000

What the Curran Case Tells Us About 'Ex corde'

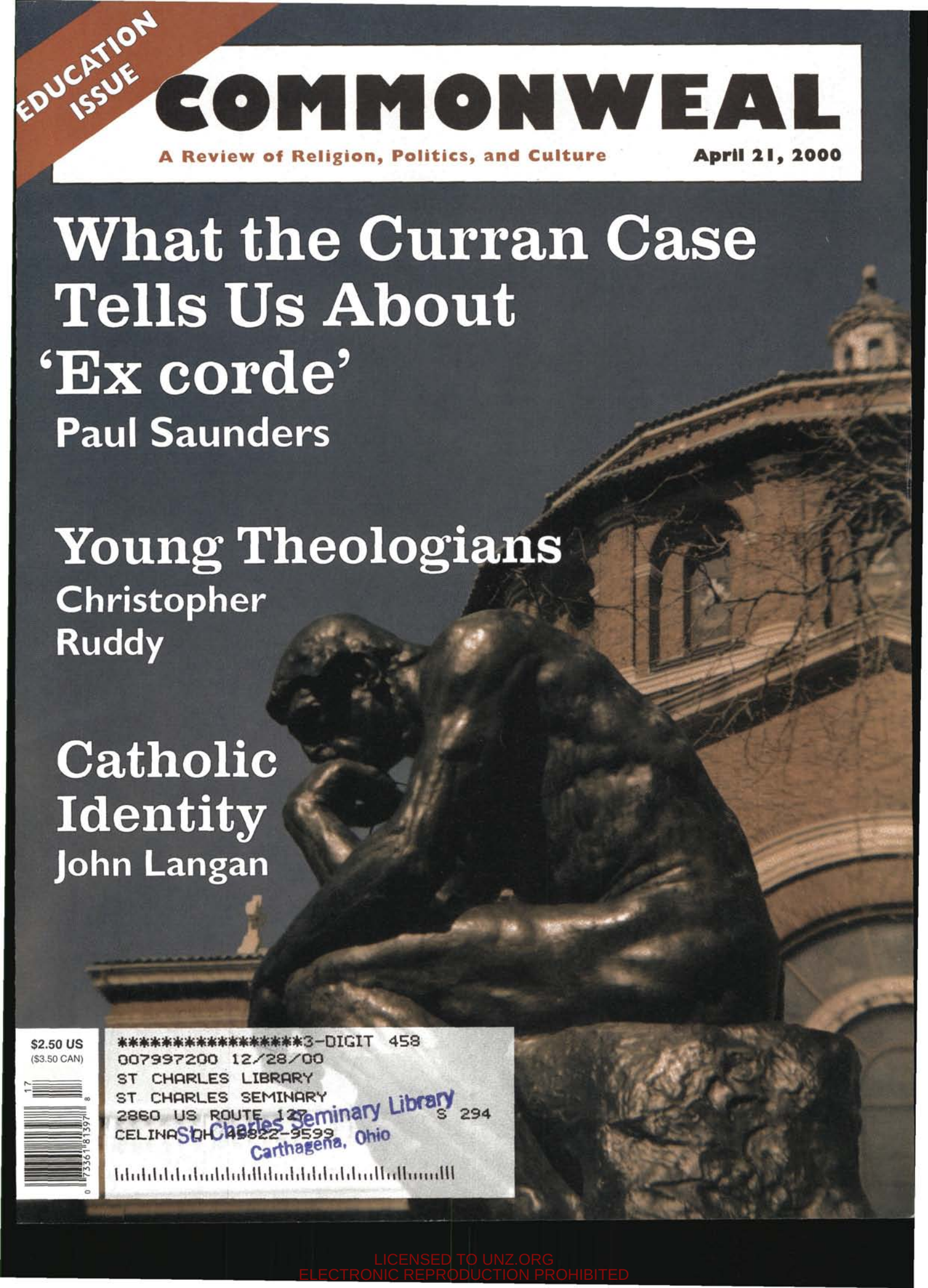
Paul Saunders

Young Theologians

Christopher Ruddy

Catholic Identity

John Langan



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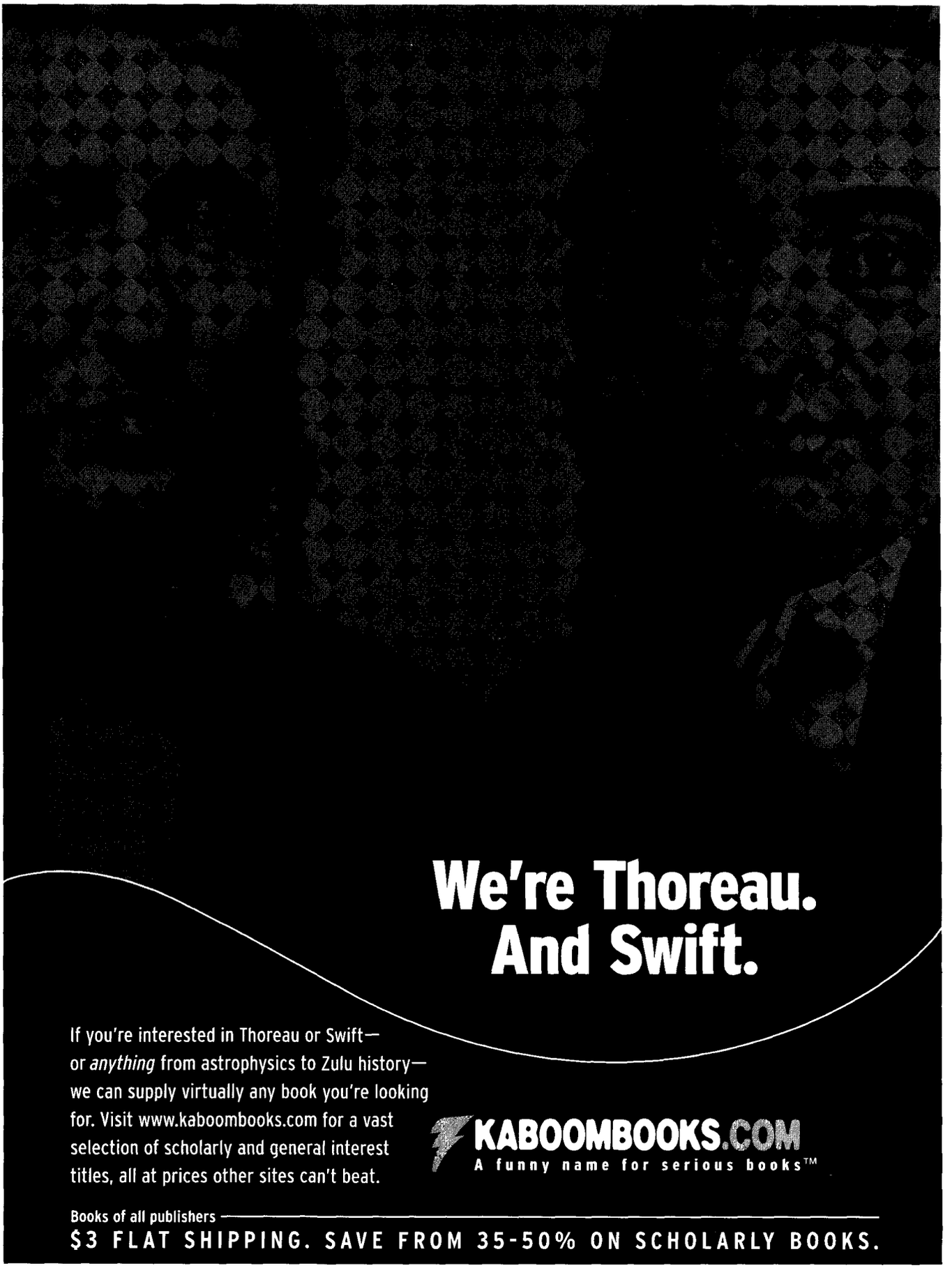
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COMMONWEAL

April 21, 2000 / Volume CXXVII, Number 8

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To the Editors

Another take

I respectfully disagree with your March 24 editorial assertion that *The Cider House Rules* is a propaganda film for abortion. Yes, I heard a John Irving's homage to Planned Parenthood and NARAL (National Abortion Rights Action League) at the Academy Awards ceremony. But consider this: the apparently kind and gruff Dr. Larch is no poster boy for any cause, abortion or otherwise. The film makes it clear that he is a manipulative s.o.b. who nightly etherizes himself to sleep, and eventually to death.

Then there is Homer. His initial refusal to perform an abortion, on the grounds that it is illegal, is hardly morally profound. When he does terminate Rose's pregnancy, Homer becomes aware that abortion, in and of itself, cannot secure a livable future for those who undergo one. It certainly does not for Rose. She stabs her father and runs away...to what kind of life? We can only guess.

I would venture that when Homer returns to the orphanage, he will not perform abortions. His reasons for not doing so now extend beyond the legalities and personal queasiness. I realize this is an idiosyncratic, and possibly overly benign, interpretation of the film, with which few will agree. But I'm sticking to it.

GERALD P. COHEN, C.S.C.
Middletown, Conn.

The writer is Roman Catholic chaplain at Wesleyan University.

A bonanza

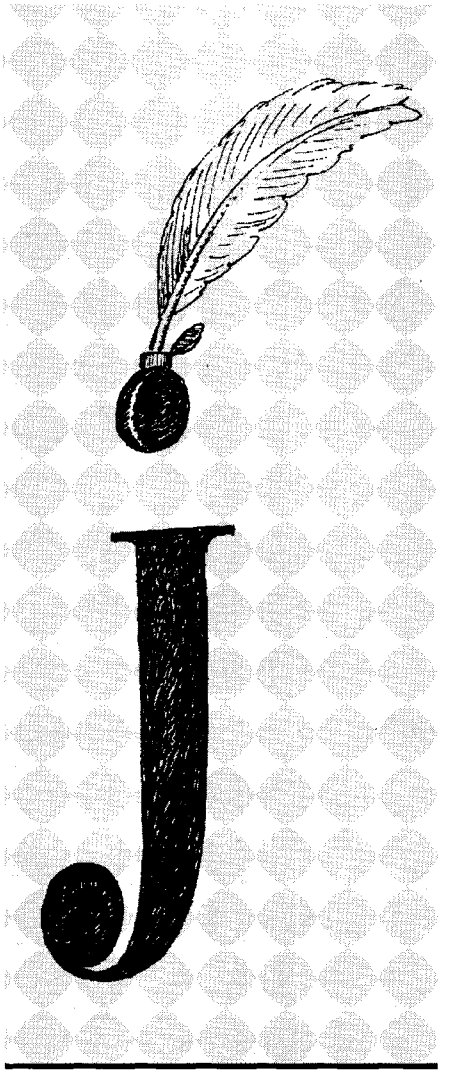
Here's a raised pint of Guinness to *Commonweal* for the splendid issue of March 10. By coincidence, your articles underscored, in one way or another, the major themes of many recent curmudgeonly railings: the giftedness of John XXIII's beatification, the deplorable state of Irish Catholicism, the politics of canonization, the infuriating blandness of NPR's "Fresh Air," the good old days of the Young Christian Students, and, yes, even the quality of "West Wing's" Catholicism.

Unlike other publications of its genre, the topical appeal and the continued quality of *Commonweal*'s format and writing always inspire.

J. MURRAY ELWOOD
Strafford, Pa.

Wear the collar

Correspondent John Hazard asks [March 10]: "...Catholics may wonder why any kind of [clerical or religious] garb...should be thought of as evangelism." In principle, Hazard ought to be right. But he fails to consider the age in which we live. For the average unchurched contemporary North American, clerical or religious garb observed in public places may be the only form of physical Catholic witness she or he will experience outside a largely negative media.



It can be persuasively argued that some sign, any sign, indicating to the world that "we are among you" has evangelistic value. Next time you walk through an airport or mall, judge for yourself how easy it would be to conclude that the Catholic church is virtually absent from everyday modern life. Then ask yourself again if clerical garb serves no missionary purpose, especially in a culture that evangelizes ubiquitously through the power and suggestibility of the visual image.

JOHN DAVID
Alexandria, Va.

Medical issues

A few observations on your excellent issue of February 25. Clark E. Cochran's recommendations in "Another Identity Crisis" should have included an explicit affirmation of Catholic ecumenical commitment since Vatican II. Fundamental to being "Catholic" now is to welcome the many participants (doctors, nurses, and other employees) whose commitment to care for the ill derives from their non-Catholic or nonreligious (agnostic or atheistic), but deeply held, moral commitments. Catholic identity in health care should be understood not primarily in terms of "sectarian" emphases.

Second, as an expression of devotion to patients as persons, a *sine qua non* of such sacramental/incarnational compassion, Catholic health care must include commitment to palliative and hospice-type care for the dying. Pessimists about the economic viability of Catholic health care should be reminded that it remains a fundamental form of witness to the healing mission

(Continued on page 36)

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: commonweal@msn.com. Web: http://www.commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, ME 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 475 Riverside Dr. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Commonweal, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 405, New York, NY 10115.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, OH 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional offices.
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Single Copy, $2.50. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $44; Canada, $47; foreign, $50. Special two-year rate: U.S. $75; Canada, $81; foreign, $87. Annual rates for air-mail delivery outside U.S.: Western Hemisphere, $84; Europe, $89; other parts of the world, $99. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover design & art: Christopher Young; p. 3, Bill Matlock; pp. 4, 30, Valerry; pp. 6, 20, 23, Ross, Rothco; p. 7, Engleman, Rothco; p. 8, Joke, Rothco; p. 10, 26, Matt, Rothco; p. 12, Cork; p. 17, Baloo, Rothco; p. 24, David Lee; p. 28, Charlot; columnist portraits, Elaine Mills.

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A boy, not a symbol

In 1962, Cuba and the United States nearly plunged the world into nuclear war. Today, most Americans see Fidel Castro, Cuba's Communist dictator, and his dilapidated island as more of a historical curiosity than a threat to American security or world peace. If anything, our economic boycott of Cuba strikes many citizens as overkill against a doomed outpost of a discredited system. It is no wonder that most Americans find it difficult to understand the passions roused in the Cuban-exile community by the plight of Elián González, the small boy U.S. immigration officials are trying to reunite with his Cuban father. Why the threats of violence and civil disruption if Elián is returned, as the law stipulates he must be, to his parent?

One reason is that the Clinton administration has been pursuing, albeit tentatively, the normalization of diplomatic relations with Cuba. This policy is not based on any illusions about the nature of Castro's regime, but on a recognition that the greater the contact between Cuba and the United States, the quicker and more peaceful will be the post-Castro transformation of Cuba. Part of any such normalization process entails the impartial enforcement of the law, and that means respecting the custody claims of Elián's father.

A good number of Cuban Americans oppose any normalization of relations, arguing that Castro must be opposed in every way possible. Castro is held responsible for the loss of their homeland, for years of forced exile, and for the separation from and the death of loved ones. Historically, official U.S. policy has both cultivated this resentment and frustrated it. Since the end of the cold war, the anti-Castro cause has seemed anachronistic to many Americans, and increasingly to many second- and third-generation Cuban Americans. But as the potentially explosive situation in Miami shows, Castro is not ancient history, nor is the battle against communism over, for many who consider themselves still "in exile."

Elián's near miraculous survival has become a symbol of all that the first-generation exile community has sacrificed and all that it hopes for. In that context, it is not hard to understand the passions surrounding the child's fate. The relatives who have cared for him since his rescue off the coast of Florida in November do not want to see him returned to a place his mother died trying to escape. Nor is it easy to dispute the community's conviction that under Castro Elián's father is not free to seek what is best for his son. (Coercive pressure from the exile community on Elián's Miami relatives shouldn't be discounted, either.) What must be disputed, however, is whether or not resisting Castro requires that Elián be forcibly kept from a father who loves and wants him.

No peaceful resolution of this crisis is possible if commitment to the rule of law is sacrificed on the putatively higher altar of anti-Castroism. In that light, it is impossible to understand how public officials, such as Vice President Al Gore and Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas, could pander to the most extreme elements in the exile community. As many have noted, Penelas's statement that local police would not cooperate with the federal government to enforce the law bordered on the sort of local nullification not seen since the South's resistance to federal desegregation laws. Even worse was Penelas's suggestion that Attorney General Janet Reno

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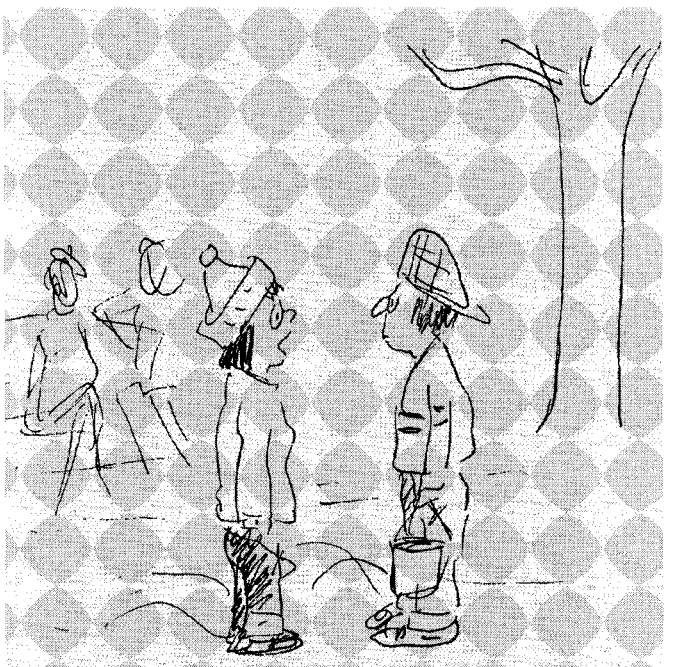
would be responsible for any violence that might occur should the federal government act on the rulings of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Adding to the volatile situation created by Penelas's statements was Gore's support for the spurious custody claims of Elián's Miami relatives. Gore's willingness to abandon the policies of his own administration in a transparent pitch for Florida's crucial Cuban American vote confirmed what many of his longtime critics have said: that he seems willing to do almost anything to get elected president.

As we go to press, Elián's father, accompanied by his current wife and their child, has come to the United States to regain custody of his son. Attorney General Reno, who has shown a calm but firm attitude throughout this crisis, is now pressing Elián's Miami relatives to comply with the INS ruling and return the boy to his father. "The law is very clear," Reno stated. "A child who has lost his mother belongs with his sole surviving parent, especially with one who has shared such a close and continuous relationship with his son."

Ideally, Juan Miguel González should be given as much time in the United States as he needs to decide what is best for Elián and the family. Doubts that Mr. González has been free to speak his mind should not be scoffed at. Castro has clearly been stage-managing the father's actions, if not his opinions. Equally obvious, however, is that Elián should not be deprived of his father if his father chooses to return to Cuba. The United States government is not in the business of separating parents and children for political reasons. Opposing Castro does not justify keeping this child from his father.



"I don't know where I came from, but I always wanted to be here."

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ET CETERA

Easter hope ■ "I have often thought of the words of Saint Paul: 'Patience breeds hope' (Romans 5:4). One would have thought that it was just the reverse, that a man could wait patiently because he had hope in his heart. In a certain sense this is true, but the order in which Saint Paul puts it reveals a more profound truth. Those who do not know how to suffer, do not know how to hope either. People who are in too much of a hurry, who wish to grasp the object of their desires immediately, are also incapable of it. The patient sower, who entrusts his seed to the earth and the sun, is also the man of hope. Coventry Patmore has said that to the man who waits all things reveal themselves, provided that he has the courage not to deny in the darkness what he has seen in the light....

"If this patience is that of the sower, it is necessarily accompanied by a cross. 'Those who sow in sorrow, reap in shouts of joy' (Psalm 126:5), but sometimes they do not reap at all, for 'one sows and another reaps' (John 4:37). The cross is a condition of every holy work. God himself is at work in what to us seems a cross. Only by its means do our lives acquire a certain genuineness and depth. Nothing is meant wholly seriously unless we are prepared to pay the price it demands. 'It belongs to the place in our poor hearts which is not even there until suffering has entered in' (Leon Bloy). Only when a man has suffered for his convictions does he attain in them a certain force, a certain quality of the undeniable, and, at the same time, the right to be heard and to be respected. *O crux benedicta.*"—Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians*, trans. Philip Loretz, S.A. (Newman, 1966).

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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

PRAYER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

I'd bet my life on it

I went to my first healing Mass last month. We prayed for the recovery of a member of the parish who is suffering from cancer, and one by one we went up to anoint her with oil. This week three hundred people came to a prayer service for a young man who had been struck down with bleeding in the brain and was battling for his life in the intensive care unit. In a neighboring Westchester County, New York, parish another intensive prayer vigil went on day and night for a young girl hovering between life and death. Similar healing services and vigils are appearing all over the country and include many young people who pray for the recovery of their friends.

Is this the Holy Spirit stirring up the church and culture? My hunch is that this dynamic also accounts for the proliferation of alternative medicine and "spiritual" therapies that we see. The growth of complementary and alternative medicine in the last decade has involved millions of Americans (*see* "Alternative Treatment," November 5, 1999). Whether formally religious or not, Americans seem convinced that the unity of mind/body/spirit calls for a variety of efforts when illness strikes. Many alternative healing practices include stripped-down and syncretic spiritualities that mix Eastern, Western, and indigenous folk traditions. Christian prayer services draw on traditional New Testament practices that employ group prayer, laying on of hands, and anointing with oil.

Yet the theological foundation for these healing Masses and spiritual therapies remains shaky. How can prayer make a difference in physical health outcomes? Some religious thinkers retreat from any such claims and conclude that it is superstitious to pray for remission of biological disease. At most, prayer can change the consciousness of the persons who pray. Prayer or rituals that invoke ultimate spiritual truths may increase the participants' love and desire to become one with God's eternal will. Only in this sense can persons be said to become healed. Intercessory prayer can change nothing in the material order of nature. True?

To explore this question a massive double-blind controlled experiment on the efficacy of intercessory prayer is in progress. With twelve hundred persons in the study, one group of postoperative patients is receiving intercessory prayer (unbeknownst to them) from volunteers, and a matched group is not. In a test of placebo effects, a third matched group of six hundred is being prayed for and knows it. The hypothesis being tested is whether believers praying for patients they know only by their first name will affect health outcomes. The difficulties of interpreting any findings will be daunting. Who knows how many other prayers from family and friends the untargeted group may be receiving? And how can the experiment control for the quality of an individual person's prayers? Saints, for instance, have always been thought to be so imbued with the Holy Spirit that their prayers possess powerful healing effects. Saint Thérèse's prayers may pack more of a wallop than your ordinary Christian's. If, on the other hand, the effect of prayer is deemed to be greater simply by increasing the number of people and the amount of time spent in prayer, another puzzle arises. Why is more better? Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is always infusing love and healing the sufferings of the world. With God on your side already, who needs anyone else?

On the other hand, Christ and the early church clearly believed in the power of prayer. Christians are told "if there is anything you need, pray for it" (Phil. 4:6). Prayers for healing were particularly valued. Unfortunately, the New Testament does not include an exact explanation of what happens in the healings performed by Christ and the disciples. More troubling for believers are questions that arise when the most heartfelt prayers are not effective. One explanatory strategy has been to say that unanswered prayers were not energized with enough faith. (At times Jesus implies this.) The other tack taken is that what appear to us to be unanswered prayers actually are instances of God's refusals for our own good. Only God can know what will be best for everyone in the long run. Since we don't know God's plan beforehand, we should keep praying with all the strength and faith we can, while trustfully accepting whatever comes.

Lately another theological ap-

"We better go, it's the only health care we can afford."

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proach is suggested in kenotic theology, or the idea that God gives Godself completely in the Incarnation. In God's humility, God accepts self-limitation on behalf of human freedom. God has given up divine omnipotence in the created world of time. The creation has been given its freedom, and both chance and lawful necessity operate in an evolving universe. God depends on humans—as co-creators—to bring Christ's work to completion. The Spirit continues to work through human hearts, minds, and hands in divinely creative ways that will not violate the freedom given the world. Since God continuously creates as well as sustains the world, humans cannot know what potentialities and creative possibilities exist in an open universe. There may be many possible plans for each life, many ways in which complicated systems can work together for good in history.

Yet evil, sin, suffering, and death have already entered the story in this creation, and they remain to be struggled against until the final day. The necessity of physical death for humans is fixed, but the path to it may not be. Prayer may affect those factors that remain open and subject to chance and creativity on the part of God and humanity. Since God does not coerce, human efforts and prayers invoking divine aid make a difference in the workings of chance and necessity. The analogy of prayer as a magnifying glass has been used; holding up the glass allows the sun's encompassing rays to be focused and intensified, so that fires can be lit on earth. God's ultimate victory of love over suffering and death is assured in the coming of the kingdom, but in this "not-yet" time our creative work and prayers for healing count.

I'd bet my life that prayers and healing Masses make a difference, but they cannot do everything alone. The employment of scientific medicine and the complement of alternative modalities of care, are also graced operations of the healing Spirit. There is a struggle for wholeness going on as our creation groans in its birth pangs. That's why we continue to work, and "pray without ceasing." □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

WILLIAM PFAFF

AFRICA FOUNDERS

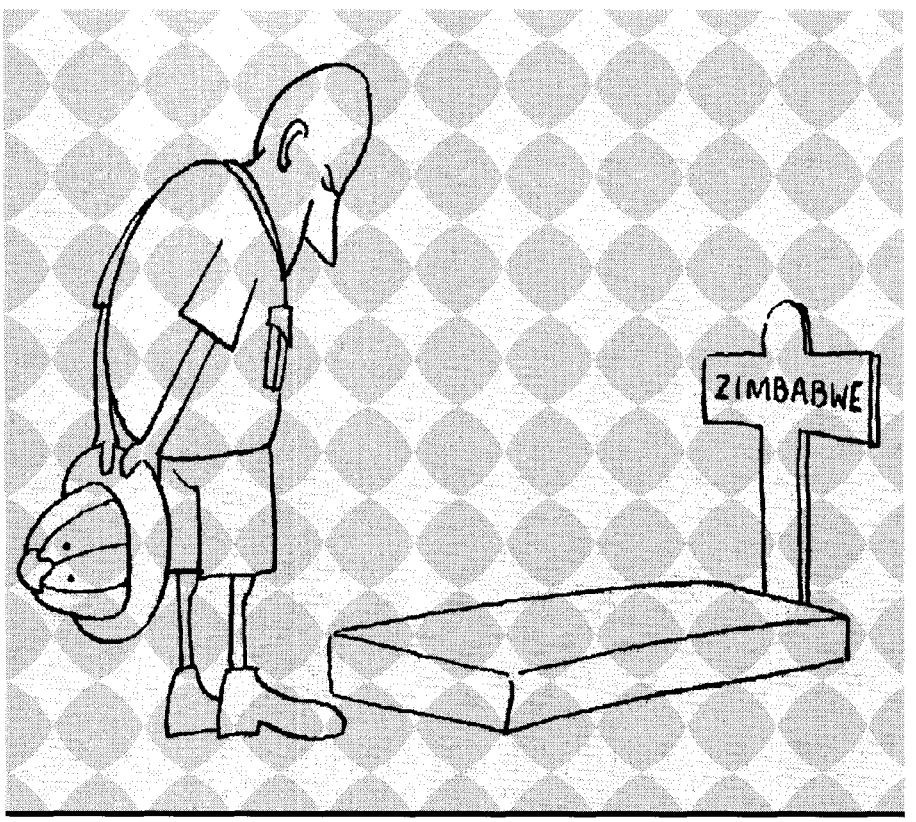
Can anything be done?

The violence that President Robert Mugabe has provoked in Zimbabwe—the former Rhodesia—in an evident attempt to prolong his personal power but undermines one of the few African societies still in possession of the structures of constitutional order and laying claim to democratic credentials. Since Mugabe's defeat in a February referendum on self-serving constitutional changes, he has played the race card against his opponents in the parliamentary elections set for next month.

His followers have been encouraged to occupy white-held farmlands—basic to the national economy—and, on April 1, they attacked white participants in a multiracial "march for peace" of some ten thousand people in the capital city of Harare. There is real danger of a new exodus of whites accompanied by repression and struggle, as Mugabe and his followers attempt to maintain what has become a corrupt regime.

This follows in a depressing modern African tradition. A large part of Zimbabwe's army is committed to the war in the Congo, ruled by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, supporting him and his allies against Congolese groups in rebellion and intruders from Rwanda and Uganda. Ethnic rivalry drives many of them, but mostly it is a competition to pillage the Congo's immense mineral resources.

Worse is the social and moral destruction that has occurred in parts of Africa, the result of colonialism and of the slave trade's overthrow of the political and social structures that existed before Africa was "opened" by the Europeans. The colonial program that fol-



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lowed, caricatured today as simple exploitation, combined imperial and economic interest with an effort by churches and "progressive" reform forces to Europeanize Africans—for their own good. This greatly contributed to cultural dislocation and alienation.

It was still going on forty years ago. If you asked an "old Africa hand" in the colonies of the 1950s what immediate African independence would mean, you would have been told political and economic disorder or collapse, the return of the forest and its secret forces, "the return of the Crocodile men, the Leopard men, the walking dead." They were, of course, right. Most Europeans, under international pressure, left Africa during the late 1950s and 1960s—"leaving no forwarding address," as someone said at the time. The Portuguese refused to leave for another decade, and were sorry. The French invented a version of neocolonialism to protect French economic interests by maintaining order. They have since given that up.

The oil and mineral companies bought their fiefs. The Soviet Union, Cuba, and the United States fought cold-war skirmishes at the expense of African clients. South Africa liberated itself, under international pressures. "Democracy movements" were launched elsewhere but repeatedly foundered. The African economy declined, its part in world trade falling from 6 percent in 1960 to 2 percent in 1995, and still less today. Africa now receives a mere 1.5 percent of world investment.

In Rwanda (and Burundi), democratic elections exacerbated ethnic tensions, overturning established hierarchies. Genocide ensued. The effort to invent a modern politics for Africa privileged ethnic representation—a revived, or sometimes even invented, tribalism. The old religions returned, but there were also new ones that were apocalyptic amalgams of old beliefs and a half-grasped Christian message. The recent murder of close to a thousand cult members in Uganda was a phenomenon of social distress with precedents elsewhere.

British scholar Christopher Clapham wrote in London's *Times Literary Supplement* [March 17] that the sources of Africa's problems "lie not only in the legacy...of colonialism and exploitation, important though this is." He described the perceived connection between temporal and spiritual realms found among people in the West African forest belt, where terrible wars of child-soldiers, with deliberate mutilation of thousands of innocents, have recently taken place. "The omnipresent but invisible forces through which life is ultimately controlled" are associated with political power, and may be accessed through the death of others. "The human sacrifice and cannibalism [in Liberia were]...means by which young soldiers, escaping from the constraints placed on their exercise of spiritual power in prewar society, sought to garner this power in their own right."

Africa needs to be rescued from its demons, to put it bluntly. No one wants to try. The former European colonial powers, principal destination of African refugees and migrants, have a direct interest in African stability, and still know the region, but they have neither the authority nor the wish to intervene. That, in any case, would defy the conventional shibboleths about racism, colonialism, and neocolonialism.

The Clinton administration's minor trade concessions and market nostrums are irrelevant to the fundamental problems. Debt relief, even new money from the international lending agencies, desirable as they might be, are not the solution. What most of Africa needs is years, even generations, of political and social development, in conditions of order. Its countries need to develop civil societies, indispensable to responsible self-government.

How can they be provided this development time, and these conditions of order? The problems are terrifying, beginning with the problem of sovereignty. An international effort to establish a cooperative or voluntary version of mandated international rule in failed and failing states seems barely imaginable. But what else is there? □

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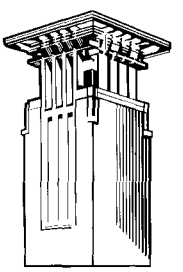

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Paul Trout

TEACHER EVALUATIONS

Some numbers don't add up

When the spring term ends, college students throughout the country will fill out teaching-evaluation forms on which they rate numerically the degree to which their instructors "knew the material," followed the syllabus, graded them "fairly," showed "concern," etc. Then administrators will crunch the numbers and use them—along with material about scholarship and service—to decide about instructors' pay raises, retention, tenure, and promotion. On a growing number of campuses, these forms are the only method used to evaluate teaching—with some departments boiling the whole thing down to the "Overall Effectiveness" number.

Although the weight given to the data varies across departments and colleges, the numbers affect—positively or negatively and to one extent or other—an instructor's career from start to finish.

What could be wrong with asking students to help identify who should be rewarded for teaching and who shouldn't? Plenty. The administrative use of these numerical evaluation forms creates an incentive for instructors to do the wrong thing: to please students instead of teaching them. The use of such evaluations to reward and punish instructors is doing more to dumb down college education than any other policy or practice on campus.

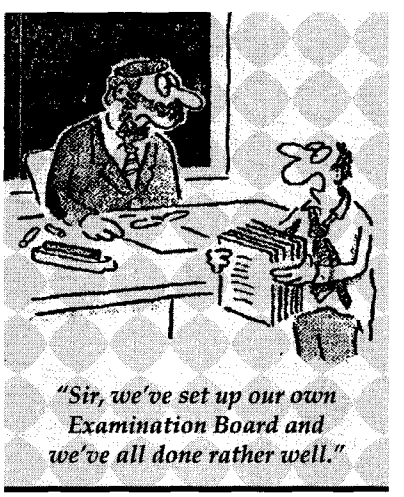
The dynamic is brutally simple. Instructors—fallible and incentive-driven like everybody outside a Trappist monastery—try to get high scores on evaluations to compete for perks such as a decent raise in pay. To earn high scores, instructors must give students what they want. And what a lot of students want nowadays are stress-free classes, "understanding" instructors, easy-to-get high grades, and undemanding workloads—in essence, "education lite."

This may sound like "student-bashing," so let me quote a few comments that students themselves made on narrative evaluations used in my department (*sic* omitted throughout): "We were bombarded with information about authors that was boring with fact"; "who gives a damn if we call it elegy or loss? Are these terms used elsewhere in lit? I've never heard of them"; "it is really hard to come to class when every day the material is being shoved down your throat"; "it is unfair to drop someone's grade because he/she missed too many days"; "I feel that he, along with every other English teacher, feels that his class is the only one and give too many books to read....Lets try to cut back shall we?"; "eight books per semester is too much to learn and retain. Six would be a more comfortable amount"; "maybe fewer books or smaller books would be better"; "could cover a little less information"; "the instructor needs to lower her standards"; "ease down on exam grading"; "I also think 2 novels to read outside of class is a bit too much. It's hard enough to get through 1"; "she should have more concern for her students, their stress levels, and their GPA's!"; "this course helped and I got a lot out of it but I feel that the professors expectations of us were too high. He didn't give much leniency toward what we wrote or toward our grades." On and on, course after course, year after year. Not quite *Mr. Holland's Opus*, is it?

To be fair, some students want challenging instructors and courses. But more and more do not. According to the annual survey conducted at UCLA by the Higher Education Research Institute, 40 percent of those entering college each year are "disengaged" from academic pursuits, a polite way of saying they are disaffected with and alienated from the educational process.

Okay, so a lot of students don't want to study. Why can't instructors earn high evaluation numbers by helping those who do? Because good students—happy to get an easy A and to have more study time—seldom give low numbers to instructors who dumb-down courses. And because even a few disengaged students—angry about a demanding workload—can have a disproportionate and devastating impact on evaluation scores simply by giving an instructor zero on each item. On narrative forms, student resentment is often naked, easy to detect and evaluate. But on numerical forms, hostility is camouflaged by ostensibly "objective" numbers.

With careers and raises often hanging in the balance, few instructors can afford to displease the growing number of disengaged students making evaluation forms. Even Mark Edmundson, a well-paid, tenured full professor at the University of Virginia, "complied" with student demands for "entertainment" and for a "comfortable, less challenging" classroom," and "reaped the rewards" on evaluation day (*Harper's*, September 1997). If he succumbed, what sort of resistance can be expected from those trying to reach $50,000 before retiring?



"Sir, we've set up our own Examination Board and we've all done rather well."

In *Generation X Goes to College* (1996), Peter Sacks, a successful journalist who took up teaching at a community college, explained with harrowing honesty how the threat of not being given tenure because of low evaluation numbers induced him to lower standards and workloads "to appease unmotivated, acutely passive students."

Although even tenured professors can be influenced by the economic and psychological pressures of student evaluations, untenured instructors and adjuncts who work on yearly contracts are the most

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vulnerable. Students know the score. I once heard a student telling friends to take courses from adjuncts because they have to give out lots of A's to keep their jobs. A few years ago an untenured faculty member in the sciences told me that after receiving low scores on his evaluations, he consciously made his course easier the next semester. "I watered it down. I did. If I weren't afraid of these teaching evaluations, I would have done it differently."

Andrei Toom, an adjunct math instructor from Russia, confessed in a scholarly journal that when students complained about his high standards, he backed off: "I could not afford to care about my students because I had to care about my safety from their complaints." "The less you teach," he advised colleagues, "the less trouble you will have from students and administrators." Expect standards to decline even more as part-timers play a greater role in undergraduate instruction.

Do I exaggerate the negative effects? I don't think so. Back in 1980, James Ryan ("Student Evaluation: The Faculty Responds," *Research in Higher Education*) did the only study I've uncovered of how a mandatory numerical-evaluation program affected the rigor of classroom instruction on one campus. The findings of this rarely discussed study provided a warning that went unheeded. Ryan found that 22 percent of instructors admitted to reducing the amount of material covered (7 percent increased it), and almost 40 percent admitted to making courses and exams easier (9 percent said they made them harder). He concluded that the administrative use of numerical evaluations had "more adverse than positive effects on faculty instructional performance."

Note that the percentages in Ryan's study represent instructors who were aware of changing their teaching patterns. But how many others—by using multiple-choice tests instead of essays, by choosing fewer or less-difficult texts, by assigning fewer papers, by not requiring attendance, by having a lenient grading system—lowered standards without acknowledging it even to themselves? No wonder a later Carnegie Foundation study (1985) found that 67 percent of professors reported "a widespread lowering of standards in American higher education."

Although others inside the academy also think that the use of numerical forms to reward and punish faculty has led to a decline of rigor and standards, don't expect colleges and universities to rid themselves of this deeply entrenched practice voluntarily. Yes, there are other, less-noxious ways to assess and improve the quality of classroom instruction, but too many campus interests are invested in the status quo. If this Trojan horse is ever to be dismantled, the hammering must be done by those outside the academy—by taxpayers, parents, legislators, and alumni alarmed that many of our college graduates seem to have attended Father Guido Sarducci's "five-minute university." □

Paul Trout *is a professor of English at Montana State University.*

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A CAUTIONARY TALE

Academic freedom, 'Ex corde,' & the Curran case

Paul Saunders

Now that the American bishops have voted overwhelmingly to adopt the revised norms requiring the application of *Ex corde ecclesiae* to Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, it is instructive to recall the Curran case. The Catholic University of America's successful ouster, a little more than ten years ago, of Reverend Charles E. Curran, one of the country's most eminent professors of Catholic theology, illustrates what may happen in any other Catholic university that chooses to become "officially" Catholic by adopting *Ex corde*, as the norms require in most cases (*see* "Look before You Leap," *Commonweal*, April 9, 1999, and "The Vatican, the Bishops, and the Academy," *Commonweal*, September 26, 1997).

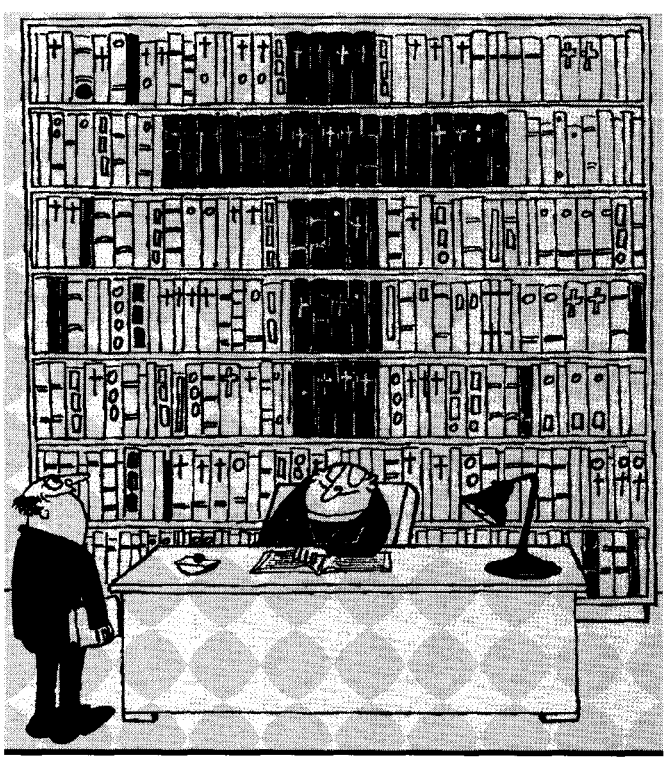
At the time, there was a perception that Curran's difficulties with The Catholic University resulted from the "special relationship" that the university had with the church, and that although what was happening to Curran was unfortunate for him personally, no great lessons for other Catholic universities could be drawn because The Catholic University of America was "different." However, the new norms' requirement of a "juridical" relationship between a university that wishes to call itself "Catholic" and the church strongly suggests that what happened to Curran could happen to any other tenured professor of whom the Vatican disapproved. Let me explain.

Founded in 1887 as a civil corporation, The Catholic University of America had a "papal charter" authorizing certain of its schools and programs, called "ecclesiastical faculties," to grant degrees that would be recognized by the Vatican. The ecclesiastical faculties were subject to a set of special bylaws that recognized the primacy of the archbishop of Washington (who was also, ex officio, the chancellor of the university) over its programs and over its faculty. Those bylaws created the same kind of "juridical relationship" between the ecclesiastical faculties and the church that *Ex corde* now requires be created between certain other Catholic universities and the church.

In 1931, the apostolic constitution *Deus scientiarum Dominus* required that in ecclesiastical faculties "those who teach disciplines concerning faith or morals must receive, after making a profession of faith, a canonical mission from the chancellor or his delegate...." In order to comply with that requirement, The Catholic University adopted special bylaws that also required those who taught theology in any of its ecclesiastical faculties to have a "canonical mission" to teach theology.

The concept of a "canonical mission" originated in the mid-nineteenth century in Germany, as a response to the German government's attempts to "secularize" the Catholic schools. In order to protect church interests from government intrusion, the German church decreed that no one could teach Catholic religion, from primary grades through the graduate level, without a "canonical mission" from the local bishop. The canonical-mission requirement was later incorporated into concordats between the Vatican and several German states, and the Reich itself. It was thus originally conceived as a device to guarantee the church's freedom to teach in its own schools against threats of state control.

Gradually, however, for reasons having to do with the continuing tension between the church hierarchy and aca-



Paul Saunders, *a partner at Cravath, Swaine & Moore, served as counsel to Charles Curran in* Curran *v.* The Catholic University of America. *His longer treatment of the Curran case can be found on our website at* WWW.COMMONWEALMAGAZINE.ORG.

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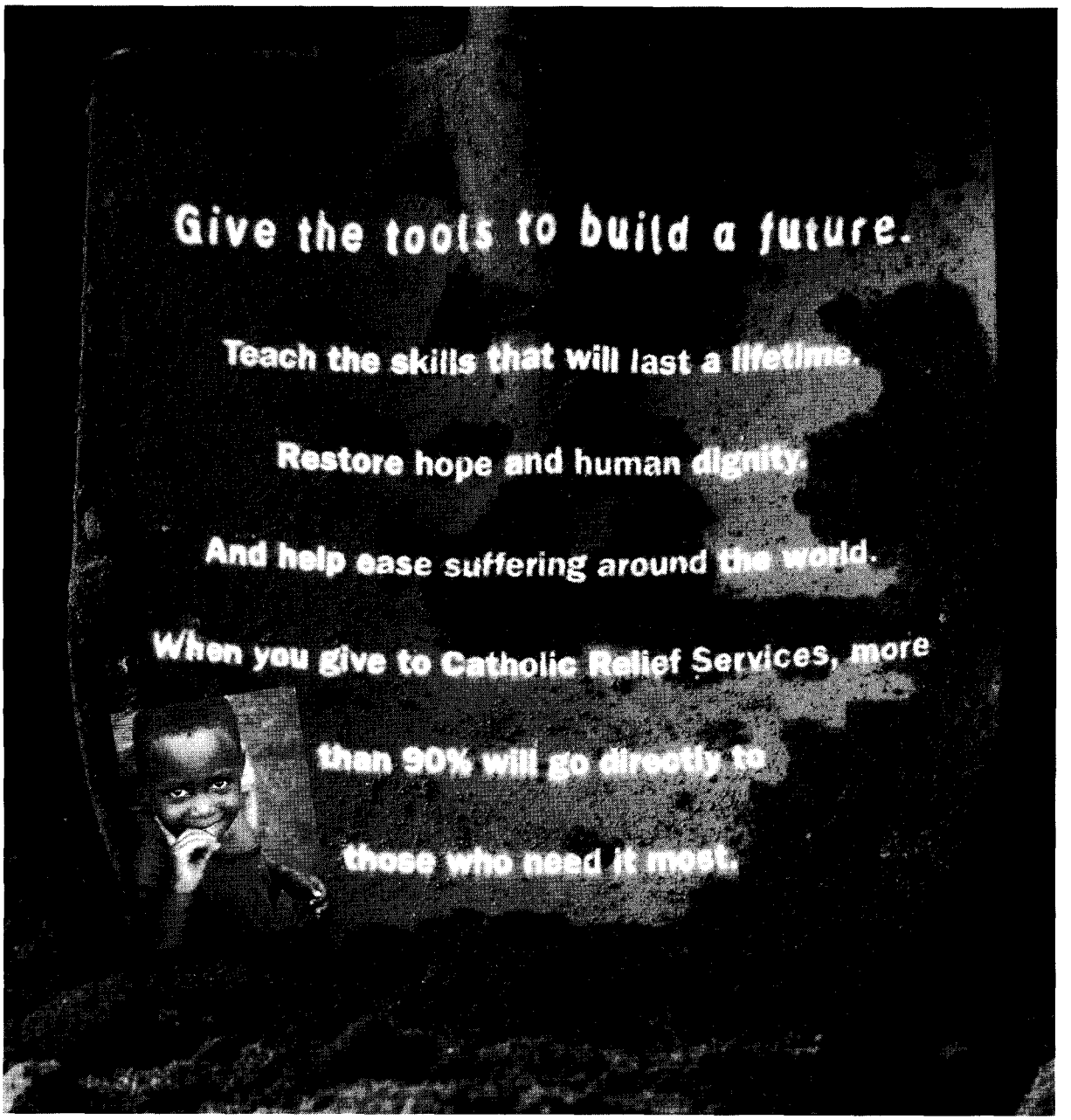
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demically free-thinking theologians, the concept of a canonical mission began to be used in church-run institutions as a limitation on the academic freedom of theologians. *Ex corde*'s "mandate" is similar to the canonical mission but it applies in all nonecclesiastical universities, whereas the canonical mission applies only in ecclesiastical (or "papal") faculties.

The concept of a "canonical mission" gradually fell into disuse and was eliminated from The Catholic University's bylaws in 1969. At that time, the university "depontificalized" itself by eliminating the requirement that clerics constitute a majority of its board of trustees. The university also reaffirmed its dedication to academic freedom by declining to take action against a number of its professors, including Curran, for publicly dissenting from the pope's birth control encyclical, *Humanae vitae*.

However, in 1979, the Vatican promulgated a new apostolic constitution for ecclesiastical faculties, *Sapientia Christiana*, that revived the requirement of a canonical mission. After an acrimonious debate, in 1981 The Catholic University revised its special bylaws and again required that professors have a canonical mission in order to teach theology. The new bylaws gave the archbishop of Washington the sole power to remove the canonical mission.

Curran, a priest of the Diocese of Rochester, New York, had come to The Catholic University in 1965. In 1969, he became a tenured professor in the department of theology, one of the ecclesiastical faculties. In 1966, just a year after he arrived, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had opened a "docket" on him. Principally, the congregation was concerned with his writings in sexual ethics, but it later appeared to be more concerned with his views on the circumstances under which a theologian could dissent from any noninfallible teaching of the church.

After twenty years of investigation into Curran's writings, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the congregation, informed Curran in 1986 that "one who dissents from the magisterium as you do is not suitable nor eligible to teach Catholic theology" or to "exercise the function of a professor of Catholic theology." As a result, Washington's Archbishop James Hickey, the chancellor of the university, announced that he had initiated the withdrawal of Curran's canonical mission and that he had suspended Curran from teaching in any ecclesiastical faculty at the university.

An ad hoc faculty committee, appointed to hear Hickey's charge, concluded that Curran's canonical mission should not be withdrawn if that would prevent Curran from teaching "in the area of his competence." Predictably, Hickey rejected the committee's conclusion, and the university's board of trustees, also predictably, then ratified the removal of Curran's canonical mission. Without a canonical mission, Curran could not teach in the department of theology but, presumably, he remained free to teach theology elsewhere in the university. In order to prevent that, the university's board of trustees passed a resolution stating that it accepted "the declaration of the Holy See as binding upon the university as a matter of canon law and religious conviction." This meant, according to the university, that Curran could not teach theology anywhere in the university, even in those departments that did not require a canonical mission.

Curran sued for breach of contract. He did not seek any damages, but he asked for "specific performance": he wanted to be reinstated as a professor of theology and to be permitted to teach theology. He lost, and the reasons why are instructive.

On February 28, 1989, Judge Frederick Weisberg of the District of Columbia Superior Court ruled that the university's actions in preventing Curran from teaching theology did not breach his contract. Weisberg found that although when originally entered into, the contract did not require Curran to have a canonical mission, the 1981 special bylaws, which did contain such a requirement, became a part of his contract retroactively. As a result, once his canonical mission was withdrawn, Curran could not teach in an ecclesiastical faculty.

The harder question, "not as easily resolved," was whether Curran could teach theology elsewhere in the university where a canonical mission was not required. Judge Weisberg asked whether the university had any obligation to allow Curran to do so, and he concluded that it did not. The university's judgment, he said, was based not upon Curran's competence as a professor but on a declaration by the Vatican. As a result, traditional norms of academic tenure or freedom did not apply. The university had freely chosen to be governed by canon law and to obey the Vatican's declarations, and if they were inconsistent with academic freedom, so be it.

Judge Weisberg said that although at the time of Curran's contract neither party could have anticipated a declaration from the Vatican that was as broad and definitive as the Ratzinger letter, Curran must have known that the university had a relationship with and a "concomitant responsibility to the Roman Catholic church":

> No one—least of all a Catholic priest and a professor of Catholic theology—could have contracted with CUA without understanding the university's special relationship with the Roman Catholic church, with all of the implications and obligations flowing from that relationship....The university did not breach its contract with Professor Curran by requiring him to teach courses other than Catholic theology or, for that matter, by requiring him to be bound by the declaration of the Holy See.

The canonical mission requirement became irrelevant, for the same result would have been reached if there had been no canonical mission requirement at all. The court held that once a faculty member knowingly entered into a contractual relationship with a Catholic university that has a "special relationship" with the Holy See, as set forth in its bylaws, the Holy See has the right and the power to determine the contours and bounds of that contractual relationship. Since a civil court could not determine what is or is not required by canon law, it must accept the university's own determination of its obligations:

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Whether or not the university is correct that it was obligated to accept the determination of the Holy See as a matter of canon law, it was surely bound to do so as a matter of religious conviction and pursuant to its long-standing, unique, and freely chosen special relationship with the Holy See.

Judge Weisberg discussed a "hypothetical contract" between Curran and the university. It had five elements: (a) the parties recognize that there is a special relationship between the university and the Roman Catholic church; (b) nevertheless, the university guarantees its professors academic freedom, which means at least (c) that the university will take no adverse action against the professor based on the moral or religious content of his speech, writing, or teaching; (d) if it is determined that professors need a canonical mission and the Vatican tries to take it away based on the content of the professor's speech, the university will defend the professor's right to hold it; and (e) if it is nevertheless taken away, the university will guarantee the professor a right to teach in an area of his competence in an appropriate department where a canonical mission is not required subject to all the rights and privileges customarily associated with academic freedom in an American university.

Judge Weisberg's "hypothetical contract" was a classic articulation of academic freedom. It set out a clear and fair method of guaranteeing academic freedom in the face of the efforts of an "external authority" to interfere with it. It offered a way to reconcile academic freedom with a university's "special relationship" with the church. It described the relationship that most professors at The Catholic University thought they had with the institution after the "depontificalization" of the university.

Unfortunately, however, Judge Weisberg found that that was not Curran's contract. In fact he found that The Catholic University of America "would never write such a contract." The hypothetical contract described the university that Curran "wanted to work for, maybe even the one he thought he was working for, but not the one with which he contracted."

Weisberg explained:

The bulk of plaintiff's proof at trial was historical. His burden, as he saw it, was to show that the events at CUA in the late 1960s had transformed the university into a place where academic freedom reigned supreme, to the exclusion of all else, including the obligations imposed on the university by virtue of its pontifical charter and its relationship with the Holy See. There is little doubt that the late 1960s was an extraordinary time at Catholic University. In many respects the events on that campus were a reflection of the turmoil on college campuses all across the country. These were turbulent times, characterized by persistent testing of institutional limits on all forms of expression of individual freedom, including academic freedom. It is hardly surprising that The Catholic University of America, with its close ties to the Roman Catholic church, found itself in the middle of these struggles. Nor is it surprising that many of the changes at the university—the Marlowe committee report and its partial acceptance by the board of trustees, new statements about academic freedom at the university, and changes in the university's bylaws and statutes, to list just a few—were directed at strengthening the independence and autonomy of the university and its faculty from interference by outside authorities, not the least of which was the Holy See.

Internally, the university had to wrestle with its own ambivalence. On the one hand, it wanted to be recognized as a university—a Catholic university, to be sure—but a full-fledged American university nonetheless. On the other hand, it continued to place transcendent value on its unique and special relationship with the Holy See.

Perhaps it can fairly be said that the university wanted it both ways; but on most issues it can also be said that the university could have it both ways. On some issues—and this case certainly presents one of them—the conflict between the university's commitment to academic freedom and its unwavering fealty to the Holy See is direct and unavoidable. On such issues, the university may choose for itself on which side of that conflict it wants to come down, and nothing in its contract with Professor Curran or any other faculty member promises that it will always come down on the side of academic freedom....

The question presented is whether [Curran's] contract gives him the right to teach Catholic theology at Catholic University in the face of a definitive judgment by the Holy See that he is ineligible to do so. The court holds today that it does not. Whether that is ultimately good for the university or for the church is something they have a right to decide for themselves.

The American bishops who voted last fall to require the implementation of *Ex corde ecclesiae* in the United States, the presidents of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, and, most important, the members of the boards of trustees of those colleges and universities who will be asked to decide whether to follow the bishops or not, would do well to consider this cautionary tale. "Juridical relationships," such as those that the new norms require to be created between a Catholic university and the church, are fraught with peril and can lead to serious unanticipated consequences, despite the best of intentions. Changes in a university's bylaws should not be undertaken lightly or without a full understanding of the implications.

Nobody at The Catholic University of America wanted to fire Charles Curran; only the Vatican did. However, because of the "juridical relationship" between that university and the Catholic church, he is now a distinguished professor of theology at Southern Methodist University. □

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YOUNG THEOLOGIANS

Between a rock & a hard place

Christopher Ruddy

The fate of young theologians has been a recurring theme in the controversy surrounding *Ex corde ecclesiae*. Margaret Farley, president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, has voiced concern (*New York Times*, November 18, 1999) that the implementation of *Ex corde* might lead many young Catholic theologians to seek employment at non-Catholic universities, thereby escaping the canonical requirement to seek a *mandatum* to teach theology. Taking the opposite tack, Richard John Neuhaus, editor-in-chief of *First Things*, has written that young theologians who would be scared away by the *mandatum* probably shouldn't be teaching at a Catholic university in the first place.

As a young theologian, I share Farley's concern for the integrity and freedom of theological research and teaching, but suspect that it is misdirected. At the most practical level, young theologians need jobs and—as Catholic colleges and universities represent a large market—will do what is necessary to obtain them, for reasons both good and bad. More fundamentally, I think that the *mandatum* will not scare young theologians away from—or keep (or bring) older ones into—the theological fold. Its more serious failure is that it does not address the more radical problem facing Catholic theology today: its increasing captivity to the mores of the academy and its concurrent ecclesial deracination. Institutional self-policing and episcopal intervention by themselves cannot remedy these problems. Young theologians are particularly affected by this shift to a more academic model for theology, since it is the context in which they are being formed, hired, and socialized. At the risk of alienating all comers, let me explain why.

I did my undergraduate work in English literature at Yale, my master's in theology at Harvard Divinity School, and I am completing a doctorate in systematic theology at Notre Dame. Moreover, because my dissertation touches on some contentious issues concerning the episcopate and the papacy, arguing that the church would benefit from internal reform and renewal, it might cause some concern to a *mandatum* review board. Nonetheless, I hope my dissertation will help me get a job. At most, I hope that it is the beginning of a vocation of serving the God and the church I love.

However, much of the public response to the proposed implementation of *Ex corde* confronts me with two unappealing options: the academy's occasionally shrill defense of academic freedom and the still uncertain shape of episcopal involvement in the appointment of theologians. Underlying both these concerns are deeper questions: How does theology relate to the academy and the church? How do bishops relate to theology and theologians? How do young theologians deal with this situation?

First, the increasingly academic nature of theology. In their underappreciated struggle for theological integrity and excellence, most theologians have taken the academy as their dominant model. They rightly insist that the university is not a catechetical school and they are not propagandists. Theology, in this model, functions as an academic discipline like any other, such as classics or chemistry, and the theologian is responsible primarily to his or her professional colleagues. The theology department has the institutional integrity necessary to conduct its own affairs, while academic freedom enables the theologian to pursue truth in an atmosphere of dialogue and critical questioning, free from outside interference. The fruits

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of such professionalism and freedom are self-evident, as are the dangers when they are compromised.

Too often, though, much of the rhetoric about academic freedom and institutional integrity owes more to autonomy than to communion. With a cry of "Leave us alone," academic freedom is defined largely in negative terms (freedom *from* interference) rather than positively (freedom *for* inquiry and truth), when, in fact, it involves both. Moreover, such shrillness masks a deeper problem for Catholic theology: it is not that episcopal intervention might compromise academic freedom, but that theology today is often simply nonecclesial and irrelevant to the needs of church and society. Answering first to the academy and second (perhaps) to the church, many theologians have become concerned primarily with addressing other scholars, speaking a shorthand unintelligible outside the academy, and piling up increasingly myopic and arcane publications, all for the sake of gaining tenure and promotion. How often, for example, do theologians—other than the usual suspects such as, to name a few, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Avery Dulles, and Joseph Komonchak—write regularly for the educated, nonspecialist Catholic public that reads such publications as *Commonweal*, *America*, and *First Things*? Where is the next John A. Ryan or J. Bryan Hehir?

With relatively few exceptions, theologians under the age of fifty are noticeably absent from the broader public debate, both within the church and in society at large. In part this is so because their academic formation and ethos have not encouraged or trained them for it. Hiring and promotions committees aren't concerned with publishing in non-peer-reviewed journals or involvement in civic and ecclesial associations, and, as a result, many theologians have lost—or never possessed—the ability to speak in a direct, intelligible fashion to the theologically unwashed. After all, what young theologian, faced with a family to feed and loans to pay, will take on work or develop skills that will not help her or him get tenure and professional honors? In short, professional and pragmatic concerns militate against theologians addressing, in David Tracy's terms, the three "publics" of academy, church, and society. In this situation, how are the ecclesial responsibility and vocation of the theologian to be renewed?

Whatever else the agenda of Rome and the American bishops may be, they are right to pursue such a renewal. Many bishops have reason to be dismayed that some Catholic theology is insufficiently Catholic, deeply critical—even dismissive—of the church's teachings on ordained ministry, its necessary role in the church's life, the unique salvific role of Jesus Christ, and life issues such as abortion and euthanasia, to cite but a few. As those who, by definition, exercise oversight (*episkope*), the bishops have the duty to maintain faith and morals. Those who argue that the bishops have no place at Catholic colleges and universities are mistaken: episcopal authority is extrinsic to theology only if theology has become so purely "academic" and removed from the ecclesial community that theologians are in effect answerable only to themselves.

At present, however, the bishops seem to be making greater demands of theologians while doing virtually nothing themselves—intellectually, spiritually, or materially—to help theologians meet them. At the simplest level, how often does a bishop meet with young theologians or graduate students in his diocese to tell them that they are performing an essential service in the church, one for which they receive little recognition or recompense? How often does he ask them for honest feedback on what they perceive to be contemporary problems, hopes, and needs? This lack of contact sends a message: either the bishop is uninterested in theology or he appears as a reactive policeman, arriving only to lay down the law when it is too late. To use another analogy, bishops often end up practicing emergency, not preventative, medicine. In such an atmosphere, the bonds of trust and respect between bishops and theologians—so much in evidence at Vatican II—are virtually nonexistent. In their absence, is it any surprise that all parties are edgy and defensive?

But what would happen if, as Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris suggested recently, bishops saw their primary task as not simply that of *verifying* or *controlling* theological truth but as *fostering the conditions* for a genuinely ecclesial theology? In his intervention at last fall's European Synod of Bishops (*see* "La pratique théologique dans un monde sécularisé," in *Études* [January 2000]), the cardinal argued that episcopal responsibility for theology is more broadly constructive than evaluative (although certainly not excluding the latter). It includes the creation and support of vibrant communities of Christian prayer and service; an intimate, liturgical encounter with Scripture, read as the church's book and not simply as a historical-critical text; a lively friendship between bishops and theologians, built on dialogue and respect for difference; a regard for the spiritual freedom of theologians, exemplified by the doctors of the church.

Is it any surprise, Lustiger asks, that the two greatest medieval theologians, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, were respectively among the earliest followers of Francis and Dominic, whose creation of the mendicant life ranks as one of the most fruitful developments in Christian history? Today, I would add, is it mere coincidence that two of the greatest twentieth-century Catholic theologians, Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, were among the most creative interpreters and disciples of Ignatius Loyola and his spirituality? Christian theology cannot flourish apart from the rich seed-bed of Christian community.

Therefore, out of the many pressing needs facing Catholic theology today—a new biblical, patristic, and liturgical *ressourcement*; greater material support of students—I would cite one area of central concern: the spiritual formation of younger theologians, who are overwhelmingly lay. Nearly all of the older generation of theologians either are or were clerics and/or religious. By the time a Jesuit began doctoral work, for instance, he had already spent close to fifteen years

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in intense spiritual formation: living and studying in a disciplined community, praying publicly and privately daily, serving in the order's apostolates. In other words, he came to theology already possessed of considerable intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral formation. Similarly, a diocesan priest would have had the experience of at least four or five years in the seminary (often more than ten, factoring in preparatory and minor seminary studies), possible study in Rome, and been deeply aware of the church's ministerial and apostolic needs. Older theologians who have fought courageously for academic excellence and freedom may not fully appreciate their own spiritual formation and the way it forged strong ecclesial identification and responsibility.

Now, however, those who study theology, despite their best intentions, often lack such formation and identification. Perhaps they have had little experience of spiritual direction, structured communal life and prayer, or pastoral ministry. In other words, despite the necessarily different forms lay spirituality takes, lay theologians have not had the opportunities and benefits of spiritual formation and ecclesial integration that previous generations of theologians had. If theology—"faith seeking understanding"—is truly to be an intersection of thought and prayer, of mind and heart, of academy and church, it is imperative that any program of theological reform attend to the new spiritual and ecclesial situation of lay theologians. The daunting nature of this task makes it no less pressing.

Simply put, young theologians live and move and have their being in a world not of their own making. On the one hand, how do they find a place in an academy dominated by some older theologians, whose intellectual clocks stopped in 1968 with the ecclesial politics of *Humanae vitae*, and a middle generation whose theology is often uprooted and diffuse? On the other, how are they to respond to bishops who appear distant and more concerned with control and litmus tests than with solidarity and nurture? Baldly put, many young theologians are not interested in fighting the old battles: in hearing the war stories of liturgical abuses of either the Left or the Right, and the seminary horror stories of the 1950s or 1970s; in practicing a theology obsessed with liberal and conservative camps and shooting down those who dare to see merit in the "opposition's" thought; in arguing the relative merits of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II; in professing loyalty to the magisterium or to the Catholic Theological Society of America. Younger theologians *are* concerned with how to grasp more fully the sources of our tradition, address the consumerism of our culture and the cheapness of all life in it, and pass on the church's liturgical and social riches to our own and future generations that are so sadly ignorant—and in need—of them.

In this work of spiritual and intellectual reintegration, neither repeated calls for academic freedom nor the *mandatum* will succeed. Seminaries, already and rightly under episcopal control, are not currently distinguished as a group for their theological research, while those institutions which are self-professedly "orthodox," like the Franciscan University of Steubenville and Christendom College, are more apologetical than theological. The *mandatum*, which often appears more as an instrument of control than of cultivation, does not address the root of the problem. It cannot bring about communities and programs of spiritual formation, lead hiring and promotions committees to give weight to supposedly "nonprofessional" factors like popular writing and speaking, or get theologians to emerge from their academic cocoons. The *mandatum* may not drive away young theologians from Catholic colleges and universities, but neither will it foster a more thoroughly ecclesial theology.

The fundamental theological problem, then, is not the dissent of a few theologians, but that so many of their rank fail to make a difference in the life of the church, doing theology not *ex corde ecclesiae*, but *ex corde academiae*. Nor is the problem that bishops wish to contribute to the truly ecclesial nature of Catholic universities and theology. It is that too often they are doing so in a counterproductive manner. Trust and responsibility can be restored not by fiat, but only by generous and respectful acts on all sides. Today's heated calls for academic freedom, on the one hand, and the *mandatum*, on the other, are not the answer. They are simply indicative of the deeper malaise generated by ineffectual theology and unreflective oversight. The question remains, what will become of young theologians? □

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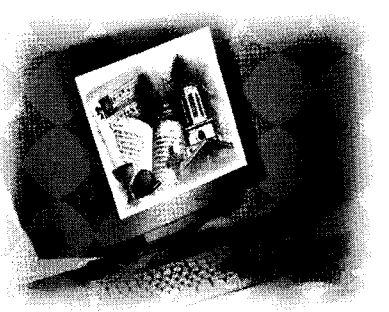

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REFORGING CATHOLIC IDENTITY

How will non-Catholic faculty fit in?

John Langan

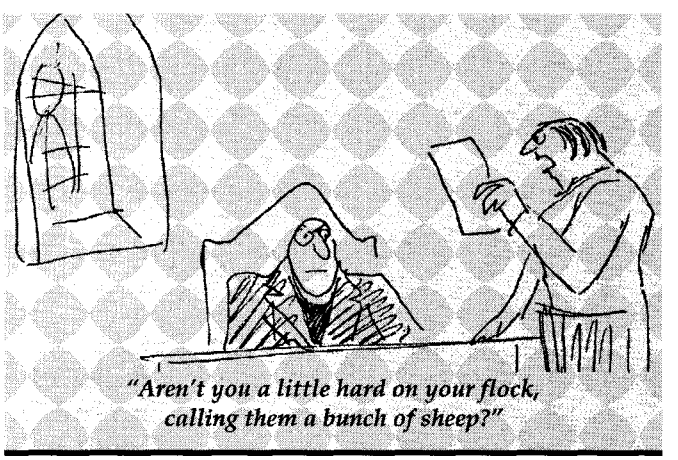
Strengthening and renewing the Catholic identity of Catholic colleges and universities is a critical concern on many Catholic campuses. Reflection and planning on the topic have become more focused as the number of religious men and women teaching in them has declined and as an earlier generation of Catholic scholars and teachers, largely trained in Catholic colleges and graduate schools, retires. Priests and religious have been replaced by a younger generation that includes far more women and is drawn from a wide range of religious traditions. In many cases before arriving at Saint Mary's or Loyola, they have no more experience with Catholic education than with Tibetan Buddhism. In theology, they are more likely to be recruited from Yale and Chicago; in philosophy, from Brown and Pittsburgh; and in other disciplines, from better graduate schools across the country, in which sympathy for the Catholic tradition is usually minimal.

Concern about the increasingly secular character of Catholic colleges and universities is felt within the sponsoring religious communities, by alumni and parents, in diocesan offices, and at the Vatican. Efforts to deal with this concern in a realistic and effective way are part of the regular agenda of boards of directors and councils of deans. Every college president today understands that the refashioning of Catholic identity in a way that will be effective in a new social and demographic context is an essential part of his or her work.

The concern over Catholic identity shows up in many different areas: the content of theology and philosophy courses, the behavior tolerated or forbidden in residence halls, the interpretation and fulfillment of the academic and religious commitment to social justice and community service, the choice of candidates for honorary degrees, the sorts of speakers who appear on campus, and relationships with church authorities. But as nearly everyone acknowledges, the heart of the matter lies with the faculty and in particular with the priorities the faculty brings to the task of choosing and hiring its own members. Can a university which has no effective Catholic presence in its faculty truly be a Catholic university? Can a university which gives religious considerations a central place in its hiring process retain credibility in the contemporary academic world? Can it cope with legal challenges to doing so? What place will a priority for Catholics leave for non-Catholic members of the faculty, many of whom have served, often with distinction, for long periods of time and who understandably resist any hint of second-class status?

One possibility, considered at the highest levels of the church, is to require that the majority of the faculty as well as of the administration and the board of trustees should be "faithful Catholics." This allows for some pluralism at the margins, and it offers a definite answer to the question of how the Catholic identity of the institution is to be maintained, namely, by recruiting Catholics. It also implies that the long-term control of the institution will remain in Catholic hands and that this can be done without affronting the majority of the university community, who will themselves be Catholic.

But who are faithful Catholics? Tests of orthodoxy and religious practice will have to be instituted. Intrusive and embarrassing questions will be asked which will deter many promising faculty candidates. The ultimate assessment of the candidate's suitability will be made by persons whose primary agenda is not academic. Many, probably most, faculty members will conclude that such an approach is an affront to the American academic tradition, that it is simply incompatible with the pursuit of excellence in American higher education. Indeed, many Catholic faculty members will judge that it is also an affront to a Catholic understanding of the university. So it seems clear that on this question of maintaining a Catholic faculty, American Catholic universi-



"Aren't you a little hard on your flock, calling them a bunch of sheep?"

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ties have arrived at a point of crisis.

Two things should be noted about this crisis. In the first place, it is an internally generated one arising out of the successful development of U.S. Catholic universities over the last two generations. During the twenty years after the Second World War, American Catholic colleges and universities, along with all other areas of higher education, grew in response to the G.I. Bill. They achieved a size and complexity which required serious professionalization. This reduced the contribution of the founding religious community or diocese to a small percentage of both the faculty and the budget. After 1965, American Catholicism became more assimilated to the American mainstream, less dependent on European intellectual models, more conscious of itself as sharing in the political and cultural life of the dominant world power, less responsive to discipline from Rome and appeals to tradition. Many emblems of Catholic distinctiveness were jettisoned. Institutions experienced both pressures and satisfactions in conforming to dominant American models and practices.

In this new phase of their history, Catholic colleges and universities found that the massive expansion of public higher education did not put them out of business. They could do well even when competing against institutions that had greater financial resources and that charged their students considerably less. By offering something distinctive, which could range from a smaller, less impersonal setting to the continuing presence of religious symbols and practices, they could attract people unsatisfied by public higher education or who were neither financially nor socially comfortable in entering elite private higher education.

In more recent decades, as the academic job market got tighter, positions at Catholic institutions became more attractive. Doctoral graduates from secular campuses might not have much sympathy with or understanding of the Catholic faith, but they needed jobs, and they came to appreciate the scale and the order of the Catholic educational world. These people often developed into fine teachers and scholars and contributed significantly to the improved academic standing of Catholic institutions.

They also came to feel at home in the individual institutions in which they worked, even though they usually remained on the secular side in the culture wars. They tended to share the values of academic liberalism, to accept abortion as both a woman's right and a personal tragedy, to support gay rights, and to be religiously reticent, regardless of their personal beliefs and backgrounds. They could sense collegiality and even affection in their relationships with committed Catholics and members of religious orders, with whom they could also have vigorous disagreements. As a result, they came to be more comfortable with Sisters of Mercy or Jesuits, Religious of the Sacred Heart or Benedictines, than with Catholics in general, or with what they often referred to with aversion and anxiety as "The Church." The Catholic university for them, and for many of those who work in it, has

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become a marbled reality, both secular and Catholic.

Today the project of turning around this history and trying to make a Catholic university more Catholic is bound to strike most of these academics negatively: as regressive, ungrateful, demeaning, threatening, intrusive, or unjust. The tensions created by such a project are, I want to emphasize, an internal result of the development of Catholic universities and colleges over the last fifty years. They are not created by Rome or by the norms intended to implement *Ex corde ecclesiae*. They would need to be addressed even if that document had never been written.

But it is not only the faculty that might react anxiously. There is a wider civic culture in which Catholic colleges and universities are embedded. The typical school is located in a city or in a region where it has become a focus of accomplishment and aspiration. It draws young men and women from inner-city schools and middle-income suburbs, from farms and country towns. Historically, it has drawn students from a diversity of religious backgrounds, though the majority have been Catholic. Among its benefactors are Jews, Protestants, and nonbelievers who appreciate the work that the college has done for them, their family, their employees, their neighbors, and their city. The college forms an important part of the life of the civic community. The civic culture expects the Catholic college to exemplify the diversity of American society in a distinctively Catholic mode, and to show that it has internalized the American traditions of academic freedom and open controversy. Given these expectations, it is very likely that a sustained effort to impose Catholic uniformity will not be persuasive to the larger civic community, and that such an effort will damage the college as a locus of civic cooperation and estrange it from important constituencies.

But doesn't the value of pluralism point in two different directions? On the one side, it pushes in the direction of more secularization. Indeed secular universities commonly pride themselves on being bastions of pluralism, diversity, tolerance, and support for nonconformity. (An outside observer may well harbor serious doubts about this, given the high degree of uniformity which actually marks their behavior and attitudes, and the recent pressures for political correctness which have led various universities to restrict certain forms of speech.) On the other side, institutions need to be pluralistic and tolerant in different ways; a distinct good is accomplished when a major moral and religious tradition as exemplified, for instance, in Catholicism or in Methodism or in Judaism, plays a constitutive role in the identity of a university.

A religious college or university has to maintain free and open discussion of the major ideas and issues of what is our common, though divided, world. It has to provide a pedagogy which will open up for a new generation of young people the depth of these issues and raise the possibility of a commitment to transcendent goods. If it is faithful to its mission, it can then offer a wider range of considerations, opportunities, and exemplary experiences than the secular university, precisely because it has the freedom to include the religious dimension of human life in central parts of the educational process. A Catholic college or university should be pressing its students, both male and female, to think about the meaning of the lives of Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa as well as Eleanor Roosevelt, Edith Wharton, Margaret Thatcher, Marilyn Monroe, and Hannah Arendt. But a view that equates pluralism with secularism and which assumes that the protection of pluralism requires the marginalization of religion is bound to miss this kind of enriching diversity.

If neither comprehensive secularization nor an effort to establish a permanent Catholic majority on the faculty is an appropriate or feasible response, what can be done about the crisis of Catholic identity? The essential task which the faculty has to carry on with regard to Catholic identity is to present the Catholic intellectual tradition, and to extend it by academic processes of interpretation, criticism, and creative development. This, of course, is not a task for each and every faculty member.

Rather, it falls on the faculty taken as a whole. What the university needs to sustain is a core body of scholars who are knowledgeable about the Catholic tradition, who pursue their various disciplines in a way that puts contemporary questions to the tradition, and who turn to the tradition for light on contemporary problems. One expects to find a number of such scholars and teachers in the theology and philosophy departments; but one also hopes for a good Dante scholar, a sociologist of religion who can look at Catholicism as a global phenomenon, an economist who knows how to interpret Catholic social teaching, a political theorist who argues within natural-law categories, a historian of the Iberian peninsula who thinks carefully about the Inquisition and the role of missionaries in colonization, a chemist who reflects on environmental problems in the light of religious values.

In any given university, one is unlikely to find all these people; but one needs a certain number of them, a "critical mass," who will talk with each other, read papers, refer students back and forth, and sustain a broad interdisciplinary conversation that meets the university's responsibility for presenting the Catholic tradition to its students. These faculty need not be organized in a particular program. Their task is to work as scholars and teachers in a university, not as professors in a seminary or in a program of religious formation. They make Catholicism effectively present both as object of study and as a vital concern of scholars.

This core faculty of scholars and teachers who maintain the Catholic identity of the university need not be Catholic themselves. The crucial criterion is intellectual interest and competence in matters that form part of the Catholic tradition.

The administration, however, has to play an active role in the development of such a faculty core. Its task is not to supplant the judgment of the faculty but to raise critical questions about the criteria and the conclusions of faculty

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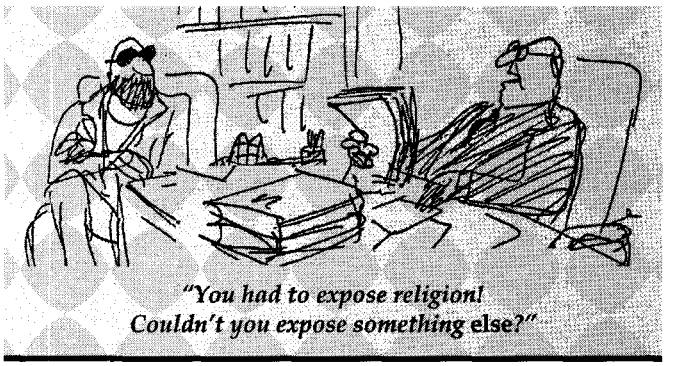
processes of deliberation. Its job is to underscore that the Catholic contribution to the educational process is not confined solely to the theology department. It must remind members of all departments that (1) the contribution to matters of Catholic concern should be identified as one of the considerations to be weighed for some of the positions which become open; and (2) that a department should understand that giving serious weight to this consideration is one of the consequences of its place in a Catholic institution.

The administration must see to it that Catholic themes and issues are well covered in the offerings and programs of the college as a whole. At the same time, the administration should recognize that it is not appropriate to insist on a contribution to Catholic intellectual life as a criterion for faculty positions across the board. Many faculty members, including highly distinguished scholars, will lack the training and the inclination to make such a contribution. Even if they are committed Catholics, they may well judge, as they look at their areas of competence and interest, that attempting to make such a contribution is not the best use of their talents or their research opportunities.

One can draw a parallel here with the administration's desire that each department in a college of liberal arts be able to contribute to the liberal education of undergraduates in addition to training future scientists and professional persons. An administration should be justifiably concerned if no one in its science departments can address such issues as the environmental impact of science, the conflicts between scientific and humanistic accounts of the human person, the social responsibility of scientists, the implications of various sciences for epistemology. But it would be foolish for an administration to lay down competence in these matters as a universal or general requirement.

Where would such a proposal for a faculty core of scholars and teachers concerned about Catholic issues leave non-Catholic members of the faculty? Clearly, proposals which threaten the academic freedom of non-Catholic professors are not acceptable. But a proposal which aims at recruiting faculty who will engage with Catholic issues in an academic and scholarly way without imposing additional requirements on other faculty members does not curtail their academic freedom. The faculty will not lose its share of power in the hiring process, which will continue to be a matter of negotiation between faculty and administration. The faculty's share in the governance of the university, which is a widely variable factor, is not diminished by a commitment of the Catholic college or university to provide a Catholic education.

Another concern, not so easily addressed, is whether this sort of proposal will produce something like a two-tier division in the faculty. This could happen in two ways. The first is by treating those faculty members who are seen as contributing to the Catholic identity of the school in a highly favorable way which discriminates against other members, Catholic and non-Catholic, who are not so involved.



"You had to expose religion! Couldn't you expose something else?"

Here the administration needs to be consistent and fair in the ways in which it applies standards of evaluation and in the ways in which it distributes benefits and opportunities. This is not an easy thing for an administration to achieve in any case, for decisions about tenure and promotion often involve incommensurable factors and confidential considerations. But the administration of a Catholic university must make strenuous efforts to meet high standards of justice and fairness in its treatment of faculty members.

The second way in which such a proposal could be profoundly divisive and destructive would be for an administration to hire candidates for the purpose of maintaining Catholic identity who are consistently or conspicuously less well qualified than their colleagues. Such a means of implementing and maintaining a Catholic identity would damage the credibility of the project and of the administration, and would harm the careers even of well qualified scholars and teachers who were identified with it.

Non-Catholic faculty are not to be regarded as second-class citizens or hired hands or guests who live on the sufferance of those who rightfully belong. The best language for our dealings in this area is probably the language of partnership rather than the language of family or of citizenship or of ownership. Partnership recognizes the distinctiveness and the autonomy of the partners and is compatible with insistence on the fulfillment of contractual obligations. It avoids paternalism and allows for real differences about values and ends, even while it provides a framework for people to work together for shared goals and to work separately when that seems best.

Finally, administrators, donors, parents, alumni, and church authorities need to bear in mind that working to develop Catholic intellectual and academic life is not a shared priority of all faculty members, and that those who do not share this priority are members of the university community in good standing and very often are significant contributors to its growth and well-being. Their work for the university and for their students is something that should be highly valued and appropriately rewarded. But it should not be taken as constituting the whole reality of a Catholic university, which must exist and flourish in the overlapping worlds of free and disciplined inquiry, on the one hand, and religious commitment which seeks further understanding, on the other. □

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Rand Richards Cooper

BAD BOYS

'Boiler Room' & 'Boys Don't Cry'

In my mid-twenties I lived briefly in Manhattan. I was trying to write fiction, and after working all morning I'd reward myself by going to a movie. I haunted the revival houses, gorging on European films and Hollywood classics: *Closely Watched Trains* at the lovely Carnegie Hall Cinema, *Night of the Hunter* at Theater 80 Saint Mark's, and *Citizen Kane* at my favorite, the Thalia, where the seats sloped upward toward the screen. A luxurious thing, to dream away an afternoon in the dark; a New York thing. It was as if the city existed to make moviegoing possible.

The only drawback was that afterward there was no one to talk to. Eavesdropping on my way out, I'd catch snatches of people's reactions—somebody trashing a film I'd liked, or exuding enthusiasm over something so palpably sentimental, so deeply *flawed*, it was all I could do to keep from lunging into their conversation. Instead, *New Yorker* in hand, I'd head for the nearest park bench to check my take on the film against Pauline Kael's. For me as for so many others, Kael was the ideal reviewer, her literariness played off against a healthy appetite for pop culture, her manner imperious but informal. Her reviews read like someone talking; you could argue with her.

Movies are intimate, and like all lovers, the lover of movies luxuriates in the talk afterward. You have a feeling about what you've seen—attraction or resistance, suspicion or joy—and now this feeling is going to be teased out into an idea. So, you ask, what did you think? A reviewer is someone who's there when the lights go up. His is the art of keeping the conversation going.

In *Boiler Room*, director Ben Younger's debut film about shady dealings in a fly-by-night New York brokerage firm, conversation is less an art than an assault. The movie follows a team of trainees learning the ins and outs of cold-calling, phoning potential investors and trying to hard-sell them stock on the spot. At J.T. Marlin, raucous disdain for clients is the rule—everyone listens in when a broker lands a big fish—and the locker-room atmosphere ripples with sexual/anatomical bluster and the gloating misogyny of refusing to sell stocks to women, or "pitch the bitch." The "senior" brokers, themselves all under thirty, dangle promises of pricey cars and big houses, and preach a casual contempt for anyone not pumped enough to prevail in the adrenaline society. "You want vacation time?" taunts the head recruiter, played by Ben Affleck. "Then go teach third grade in a public school!"

This is territory already well worked by *Wall Street* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and at first *Boiler Room* seems like nothing new. But it's Younger's shrewd insight to install a certain tiredness at the heart of his film. If Affleck's tirades sound like lines you've heard before, it's because they are. He quotes from *Glengarry Glen Ross* to his recruits; and after work, when the gang kicks back with beer and a video, it's Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* they watch—performing Gordon Gekko's "greed is good" soliloquy verbatim in a rowdy group karaoke.

What's new about this, in other words, is how old it is. Younger's baby-faced trainees have lived their whole lives within the bull-market mythos of greed is good; it's axiomatic, a given. Where Gekko's outburst came off as a blast of evil, with all the classical echoes of lust for power, *Boiler Room* portrays greed sunk to a petty narcissism: it isn't even real power these stock jocks are after, just the trappings. They're gambling junkies turned scam artists in neckties, and their true affinity is less with the buttoned-down Gekko than with the gangsta rappers whose hip-hop music juices the film's soundtrack. This is low-echelon, trickle-down greed, with no grandeur to it at all. Just another quick high—selling stocks, "the white boy way of slinging crack rock."

Boiler Room sets out to resurrect a sense of evil from this dreary setup. Its hero is Seth Davis (Giovanni Ribisi), a savvy college drop-out who at the film's outset is running an illegal mini-casino in his apartment in Queens. Conflict looms in the form of his father, a New York City judge, played with icy scorn by Ron Rifkin. "Clean up your life," he chastises Seth, "make an honest living." When fate brings to Seth's blackjack game a silky-smooth, Ferrari-driving broker from J.T. Marlin (Nicky Kat), Seth sees a chance and takes it: he'll get a real job, rescue his relationship with dad, and become a player all at once.

Alas, J.T. Marlin turns out to be a less honest business than his casino; and Seth knows it. *Boiler Room* offers an edgy meditation on intelligence and the moral stakes of everyday life. Seth quickly grasps the sleaziness in pushing dubious stocks to gullible rubes; but that same intelligence also makes him good at it. Among the trainees, he's the star.

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July 14 – 15	*Liturgical Seasons and Special Celebrations*	*Jean Marie Hiesberger, M.A.*
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"Do you know how good it feels to close someone, to sell someone?" he asks in a voice-over; and watching him pitch a nervous client (he plays it beautifully), you can't help sharing his excited pleasure in his own prowess.

Younger understands that what's most interesting about moral obligations—and most dramatic—is our attempts to evade them. From the start Seth knows something isn't adding up at J.T. Marlin. How do the senior brokers earn such big commissions? Why does the firm's compliance officer spend late nights shredding documents? Seth tries his best to hide behind a shield of ignorance, but he can't stand not knowing how the firm actually makes its money, and begins to snoop around. As he zeroes in on the fraud at the core of the firm (it involves selling stocks in phony front companies), he grows increasingly troubled.

Giovanni Ribisi's fascinating face, pale and mournfully brooding—he looks like a silent-film actor—makes Seth a study in tormented introspection. Something has to give. Younger's flashy, redemptive ending serves up a last-ditch chance for Seth to "do one thing right," and in the process delivers a surprisingly hopeful tilt on morality in our age of greed through a coy reversal of the common folk wisdom. In *Boiler Room*, curiosity may be the only way to save the cat—if the cat is your soul, that is.

To see how a superb performance can rocket a young actress from obscurity into a high-orbit career, check out Hilary Swank's Oscar-grabbing work in *Boys Don't Cry*. First-time director Kimberly Peirce tells the true-story account of Teena Brandon, a sexually confused young woman who cut her hair, switched first and last names, and passed herself off as a man in a hardscrabble Nebraska town, only to be brutalized by two of her low-life buddies when they found out. Peirce's vision of this rural dystopia is so wholly bleak, with a male element so unremittingly vicious, that it's hard to imagine Brandon ever wanting to join in; but as she riskily falls in love with the ex-girlfriend of one of the thugs, exhilaration blinds her to all danger, and events grind toward tragedy. Shrewdly Peirce keeps scenes of Brandon's undressing shielded, building curiosity; and when the nasties finally turn on Brandon, tearing her clothes off while forcing the girlfriend to watch, it's a profoundly disturbing moment—a savage reduction to the facts of gender, in which your own urge to pin her down feels queasily like complicity.

Perhaps inevitably, the film idealizes Brandon; but Swank shines nonetheless, conveying gentleness and a doomed, breathless joy. Her Brandon is shy but ardent, and ultimately tenacious in pursuit—and then defense—of who she believes herself to be. As her story begins to fall apart, she alters it piece by piece, frantically trying to keep alive a hope for love. Rarely have so many lies come off as so much truth. □

Rand Richards Cooper *is the author of* The Last to Go *and* Big as Life.

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The great triangulator

Dead Center
Clinton-Gore Leadership and the Perils of Moderation
James MacGregor Burns and Georgia J. Sorenson
Scribner, $27.50, 416 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

Among political scientists, James MacGregor Burns is hall-of-fame class, a Pulitzer Prize winner (for his study of Roosevelt's leadership) whose writings on American politics have been stretching minds for a half-century and more. Now emeritus at Williams College, he is a senior scholar of the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership at the University of Maryland, where Georgia Sorenson, a policy analyst in the Carter administration, serves as founding director.

That star quality gives them access to high places: back in 1992, Bill Clinton told Burns and Sorenson that he hoped to be a "transformative leader," one of those rare spirits who change the very terms of politics. Like a good many of us, they thought he just might succeed, and *Dead Center* is their entry in a long list of efforts to explain our disappointment.

Much of the book is a re-examination of the Clinton administration, interpreted as an inevitably unequal triumvirate of the president, Mrs. Clinton, and Vice President Al Gore. The events are largely familiar, as are most of Burns and Sorenson's interpretations, but their retelling is useful, since the public is forgetful to the very border of amnesia. And the authors give the story a certain melancholy force as a tale of lost opportunities and painful memories, the occasional triumph only highlighting the failed promise.

Clinton's defenders may protest that, in fact, the president has presided over what looks to be a transformation of American life—a "New Economy" featuring globalization, the Internet, and e-commerce that is changing us down to the toenails, to say nothing of welfare reform and a balanced budget. But Burns and Sorenson's "transformative leadership" asks for something more, a leader who is or seems to be ahead of events rather than merely reacting to them, able to "shape change," as Clinton said in 1993, "lest it engulf us," someone who vindicates the human capacity for self-government.

This helps explain the fact that Burns and Sorenson, progressive Democrats who wear their sympathies like badges of honor, speak rather kindly of Ronald Reagan, who—his obvious shortcomings aside—gave so many Americans confidence that convictions allied to public power can affect or redirect history. "We have it in our power," Reagan was fond of saying, quoting Tom Paine, "to begin the world over again." Paradoxically, Reagan, like Mrs. Thatcher, reminded us that even markets depend on political will, that they are human artifacts, even if we cannot make them behave as we please. By contrast, Clinton's presidency, far from revitalizing democratic life, is leaving an impression of politics as tawdry, inept, and irrelevant.

"We've spotted a Liberal Democrat—they're extremely rare."

Burns and Sorenson recognize that Clinton was not dealt a strong hand: in 1992, the cold war had ended, the recession did not seem severe enough to require heroic measures, and Clinton himself was elected by voters—less than a majority, at that—who chose change hesitantly, with many second thoughts. On balance, however, they conclude that the fault was not in Bill Clinton's stars, but in his disposition to a leadership strategy that is happy to accommodate and cajole, but not to confront or combat. Despite his ambitions, Clinton proved, when tested, to be a "transactional leader," working within the existing political horizon, guided less by convictions than by an instinct for survival.

Harry Truman, that paladin of the moral center, loved the sound and smell of political contest. By contrast, Clinton's tactical "centrism," with its distaste for public conflict, is inherently uncomfortable with partisan debate and with democratic argument generally. As Burns and Sorenson remind us, the administration's health-care strategy assumed that the public could not understand the policy and that politicians would corrupt it, preferring—disastrously as it turned out—to hide its hand. Yet are Clinton's shortcomings explained—as Burns and Sorenson suggest—by a lack of conviction and courage, a failure of

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moral leadership? Or is a good part of their objection directed against the convictions he has?

Clinton, after all, has defied a considerable majority by opposing a ban on "partial birth" abortions; he offended labor over NAFTA and trade policy generally; and, though his list of accomplishments is thin, he hasn't wavered much in his commitment to racial equality. Clinton's politics, in practice, has reflected a fairly consistent elite liberalism, concerned with the categories of "identity politics" (he fumbled on gays in the military, of course, but his sympathies aren't in doubt), zealous to promote a broadly shared material well-being, but showing only a tepid interest in advancing economic equality or self-governing citizenship.

Hillary Clinton told the authors (mid-1998, before the president's "confession") that the administration's greatest achievement lay in having restored the "legitimacy of democracy" and in "reknitting the social fabric." She might as well have praised her husband for his fidelity: disenchantment with politics has never been higher, and America's rush toward two-tiered inequality has become downright frenzied.

Perhaps Mrs. Clinton would speak differently now. Burns and Sorenson hope so. Regarding Al Gore as too complicit in Clinton's "centrism," they allow themselves to predict that Hillary Rodham Clinton will emerge in her own right as a "militantly progressive" political leader. Maybe she will; running against Rudy Giuliani would turn almost anyone into a street fighter. Still, Mrs. Clinton did mastermind the administration's cabalistic politics of health care, and American progressives would be wise to cultivate a few alternative champions. On the major point, however, Burns and Sorenson have it right: In a time of transformations, America has every need of leaders capable of reviving its faltering democratic faith. □

Wilson Carey McWilliams, *a frequent contributor, is the author of* Beyond the Politics of Disappointment? American Elections 1980–98 *(Chatham House), among other books.*

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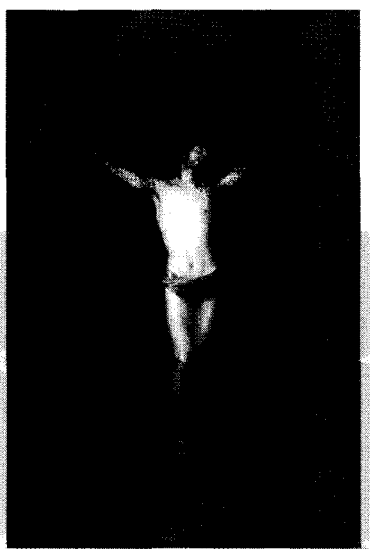
MEDITATIONS ON THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS FROM THE CROSS



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A SCHOLARLY MIRACLE

Lourdes
Body and Spirit in the Secular Age
Ruth Harris
Viking, $34.95, 474 pp.

Steven Englund

On a pilgrimage to Lourdes, in 1897, a French priest asked a stretcher-bearer to fill his glass, not with fresh water, but with water from the pool filled with the pus, blood, and scabs of the sick pilgrims. The priest made the sign of the cross over the full glass, drank it to the lees, and said with a smile: "The water of the good Mother of Heaven is always delicious."

The scene gives new meaning to Huysmans's famous description of Lourdes as "a hemorrhage of bad taste," and yet by the time you're done with Ruth Harris's book, you sympathize with the priest. Better, you have a feel for what he felt.

"I began thinking about Lourdes over fifteen years ago, when writing another work on French medicine towards the end of the nineteenth century," Harris explains her fascination with the pilgrimage site. "As I examined Parisian physicians' confident assertions that a new scientific age had dawned and that religious belief was to be swept away like cobwebs from a musty closet, I wondered how it was that Lourdes was living through its 'golden age' at the very same moment."

Thus does Harris, an Oxford Don, open her book. A few lines later she confides that "the passionate Marianism and concrete monumentalism of the shrine was repugnant to me....Lourdes seemed to represent little more than kitsch for the Catholic masses." Her journey became what research should be (among other things), but so seldom is, a journey into the self. The result is a remarkable work that evokes the best of several literary genres: travel, journalism, hagiography, history, memoir—and even "self-help," for the ways this book forces you to think about "what can I do to get what she done got."

Harris was not converted in the classical sense. She remains a (Jewish) agnostic, but she possesses an open-mindedness, a compassion, and a sympathetic capacity to appreciate and limn the "faith experience" that puts one in the mind of Henry Adams's *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* or William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Consider, thus: "The unending commentary on [Bernadette's] body in ecstasy was an attempt to articulate what some acknowledged could not be expressed through language. Her physical gestures

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and expressions seemed to draw on that aspect of shared culture that went beyond words....Her extraordinary manifestation of religious experience fitted into a form of communication and understanding that was physical rather than verbal; it was not what she said, but the nature of her trance, the movement of her hands, and the quality of her tears that persuaded....Like the suave odor of the uncorrupted bodies of saints, Bernadette's physicality convinced them as much, if not more, than the verbal messages that she relayed."

Or take Harris's comparison of Bernadette with her only rival as France's great "young-girl saint" of the nineteenth century, Térèse de Lisieux: "In contrast, Bernadette did not talk about the spirituality of childishness, for her childhood was hard, poor, riddled with illness, and had nothing of the sentimental about it. But in presentation she was the eternal child—inarticulate, simple, naive, occasionally mischievous."

There is hardly a key topic in nineteenth-century religious, cultural, social, scientific, literary, intellectual, and political history to which Harris does not deal a fresh or commanding blow. For just one example, she attributes a main reason for "the calls of feminism" going unheeded by women in nineteenth-century France (a familiar lament), not to the familiar accusation that "the church sought to block women's aspirations," but rather precisely because the church was "so effective at channeling them in spiritual and practical directions outside the republican mainstream."

Harris is particularly strong at portraying religion's powerful presence behind the hostile secular Third Republic: "They labored at Lourdes to be like Mary and Jesus, to succor the dying and heal the sick through elaborate rituals of touch, consolation, and care. The secular republic lacked the emotional and historical resources to challenge the power of this vision as effectively as it wished, hence, perhaps, its hurried efforts to build new traditions and elevate alternative heroes...."

Her own judgments are immensely more nuanced and refined than those of traditional French historians: "Even if divine intervention is rejected as a possibility, reducing such occurrences to the pejorative notion of suggestion is to misconceive the process of healing, and to stay within the analytical trap that Zola and his fellow fin-de-siècle protagonists created. Understanding what took place requires an imaginative sympathy for the psychic and physical world that pilgrimage generated, for the way intense prayer, unabating pain, and extreme humility were bolstered by the support of helpers and believers convinced of the ubiquity of miracles at Lourdes."

Harris makes the reader focus on her subject(s) more than on her book, which is saying a great deal. You make a pilgrimage in reading *Lourdes: Body and Soul in the Secular Age*, and you forget you are riding in a first-class carriage. What Harris convinced me of is that the central figures she treats—from the naive and illiterate, but appealing and quite stubborn Bernadette Soubirous, to her parish

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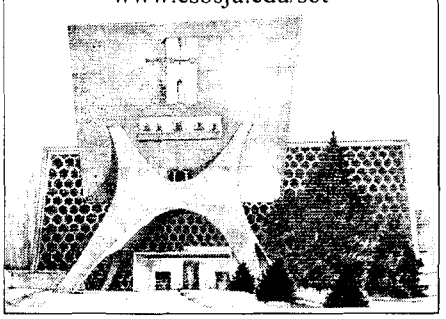

priest, the good Abbé Peryramale, to the Catholic physicians who honestly and fairly ran the Medical Bureau at Lourdes, to, well, perhaps to the Blessed Virgin herself—are all interesting, unusual, and worthy *dramatis personae* who bespeak individuality and depth, who break through the molds in which they are invariably cast.

These lives also bespeak mystery, and make an honest person, agnostic or believing, think—and more than that, wonder. Their stories might well make you wish to visit Lourdes, if not as a pilgrim seeking a miracle, or a social anthropologist seeking to study a phenomenon, or a journalist angling to get "the story," then as a human being hoping to know oneself and the human condition a little better, and sensing that this cannot happen unless suffering and illness, marginalization and stigma, faith and the supernatural, are considered.

This book is a work of scholarship and sympathy that, if I may close as I opened, drinks very deeply of its subject without remotely giving a bad taste. □

Steven Englund, *a frequent contributor, lives in Paris where he writes for* UNAIDS.

FAR-FLUNG IRELAND

The Great Shame
And the Triumph of the Irish in the English Speaking World
Thomas Keneally
Nan A. Talese Doubleday, $35, 712 pp.

James Duffy

Between 1841 and 1881, the population of Ireland declined by almost half, principally through emigration, both forced and voluntary, and the devastation of the potato famines. In this massive volume the highly regarded Australian novelist Thomas Keneally tells the story of what he chooses to call the Irish "diaspora."

The prolific Keneally, searching for a subject after the great success of *Schindler's List*, both novel and movie, focused on an ancestor of his wife, one Hugh Larkin, sentenced to a lifetime banishment in Australia for participating in an assault on his landlord's mansion. The first part of *The Great Shame* tells Larkin's story—his deportation in 1833 through his old age as, ultimately, a free citizen. However, Larkin is a tame figure compared with the more dramatic—even melodramatic—characters Keneally traces through their careers in exile. Take Thomas Francis Meagher. Born in 1823, he lived a swashbuckling life: member of the revolutionary Young Ireland movement, under sentence of death at the age of twenty-five for treason (later commuted to "transportation for life" to Australia), an escapee to New York, commander of the Union Irish brigade in the American Civil War, acting governor of Montana, and dead at forty-four as the result of suicide or assassination or drunken accident.

Or John Mitchel, a Young Ireland journalist, transported for sedition. He, too, escaped from Australia to the United States but, unlike Meagher, became a vocal supporter of the Confederacy, be-

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lieving "slavery the best state of existence for the negro," Christian slavery being preferable to brutal life in Africa. Ultimately, Mitchel returned to his homeland, becoming an Irish member of the House of Commons.

These are amazing tales. Unfortunately, when they are woven together with the stories of countless others the result is confusing, not to say overpowering. Keneally is a skillful writer, as his many novels have shown, and he moves easily from place to place and person to person. But his cast is too large and the movement dizzying; there are simply too many players and incidents to follow.

The research required to produce this history was prodigious: notes and bibliography run to more than seventy pages. Such a scholarly effort is estimable, but it would have been more impressive if Keneally had been more judicious in the use of his raw material. Too often the reader chokes on a glut of facts. John Boyle O'Reilly, for example, is one of the principal characters, but do we need to know that his fellow prisoners in an Irish jail were Color Sergeant Charles McCarthy and Private Patrick Keating and James Wilson of the 5th Dragoon Guards, Private Michael Harrington of the 61st Foot, and Thomas Darragh of the 2nd Queens? These figures appear only at the fringes of the narrative thereafter. Likewise, it appears that the author has recapitulated every American Civil War battle in which an Irish name appeared on the roster—all to prove the point that the immigrant Irish served on both sides of the conflict, often but not always heroically, and suffered much.

Keneally's talents as a novelist help him narrate the escape of four Fenians aboard an American whaler, a rousing story in and of itself. But at other times, particularly in the saga of his wife's ancestor, Larkin, he gives a fictional, or at least unsubstantiated, twist to the factual narrative. How do we know that Larkin "found the unpeopled bush a drastic contrast to the crowded, sociable countryside of Ireland, and in its fearful spaciousness an encouragement to a morbid revisiting of the personal rashness, the unchanged grievances, which had landed him here"? Fiction based on fact is one thing; history embellished with fictional touches is often annoying.

Although Keneally covers much ground that others have plowed before him (notably in Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger* and Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore*) he also explores (at least for this reader) interesting new territory, especially the saga of the quixotic American Fenians, veterans of the American Civil War, who plotted to invade Canada as a means of sapping British resolve to retain dominion over Ireland.

One of the most pleasurable features of the book is the author's inclusion of contemporaneous poetry, much of it political, a great deal of it amateurish, but nearly all moving and often amusing. Take for instance an anthem written for the Fenian incursions into Canada:

> We are the Fenian Brotherhood,
> skilled in the arts of war,
> And we're going to fight for Ireland, the land that we adore,
> Many battles we have won, along with the boys in blue,
> And we'll go and capture Canada for we've nothing else to do.

Keneally sets forth multiple meanings for the "shame" referred to in his title: the shame of the failure of nineteenth-century Irish activists to establish a nation; the shame of British rule and anti-Catholic discrimination; "survival shame" analogous to the shame of Holocaust survivors, "the irrational but sharp shame of still standing when so many fell"; and the shame of transportation itself.

Despite the author's daunting inclusiveness, he still leaves the reader with such questions as the role of the Catholic clergy—much mentioned but never really discussed—in opposing Republican rebellion in Ireland and Fenian agitation in America.

All my reservations aside, *The Great Shame* is a fine entertainment for the reader with enough stamina. The effort is somewhat like listening to a captivating bard in an Irish saloon, telling a rollicking, compelling, and disjointed tale, but one that goes on too long. □

James Duffy *is a New York writer and retired lawyer. His novel,* Factions, *will be published by Simon & Schuster next winter.*

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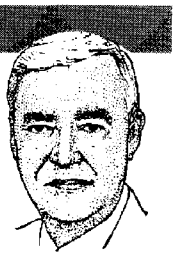

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Eileen Egan is one of the most remarkable Catholic women of our time. Her active and rich life includes work with Catholic Relief Services during World War II, participation in the peace lobby at the Second Vatican Council, collaboration with Mother Teresa (about whom she wrote a prize-winning study), and an intimate friendship with Dorothy Day. Egan is a tremendously spiritual person who has spent her life as a maker of peace and a staunch foe of violence in all its forms.

Peace Be with You
by Eileen Egan
Orbis, $22, 350 pp.

Peace Be with You is Egan's *summa* of peacemaking theory and practice. As such it can be read either systematically from beginning to end or episodically according to its discrete sections. Either way, the reader will find fascinating details about the movement for peace and nonviolence. Part history, it gives us a panoramic view of the theory, praxis, and lives of the peacemakers of the church in our time.

Egan divides her work into three large sections. The first traces the attempts made over the centuries to develop what she calls the "Way of Justified Warfare." The central chapters of that section treat three major figures in the development of what is known as the "just war" tradition: Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Bernard of Clairvaux.

The second section addresses a multitude of topics under the rubric, "The Way of Nonviolence." The eight chapters which constitute this section include an exploration of a "theology of peace"; a recollection of the peace lobby at the Second Vatican Council; a chronicle of the nonviolent revolutions in the Philippines and Eastern Europe (with wonderful pages on the indefatigable Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr); portraits of Thomas Merton, the Berrigan brothers, Martin Luther King, Jr., and other adherents of Gandhian nonviolence; and a history of conscientious objection (the evolution of Catholic thinking on that issue is fascinating). A particularly fine section of chapter 14 sketches a history of the Pax Christi movement.

The third part of the book devotes two loving chapters to the life and witness of the late Dorothy Day—chapters with a special poignancy since Eileen Egan herself was such a close friend of Day and a steady collaborator of the Catholic Worker movement as a regular contributor to its newspaper's pages. Her portrait of Day has the ring of authenticity.

Two aspects of Egan's temperament suffuse the work. She is self-effacing (the index does not even include her own name), so much so that one fervently hopes that someone will write her remarkable life story if she cannot be induced to do so. In addition, she is very judicious in her treatment of persons and events. When confronted, for example, by the cliché-ridden question of pacifism in the Second World War (an issue that vexed many members of the Catholic Worker), she calls that war "just." But she adds that if the victorious powers had not been so punitive at the end the First World War, Hitler might never have risen to be a leader. In other words, a just war was waged because issues of injustice led to the rise of those against whom war had to be waged. There is, of course, a cautionary tale in that observation.

To be fully committed to peacemaking in a radical fashion is a conversionary grace from God. The witness of an Eileen Egan, as well as the kind of book that she has written, is an "occasion of grace." May we hear more from this exemplary woman.

Painting the Word: Christian Pictures and Their Meaning
by John Drury
Yale University Press, $25, 220 pp.

One of the duties of the dean of Christ Church (Oxford) is to preach the annual Christmas sermon. After having fulfilled that obligation for four years, John Drury

Reading Homer

On the katabatic march, Tuck
(our tutor) drilled, countersunk and bolted
dactyls into our brains so that, though we
groaned at the long wooden tables of our
recitations, I still carry Homer's
Greek with me in my memory to bus stops,
whispering the passage of Tiresias
under my breath, assuaging what time

I might have lost with no other sounds
at hand to vanquish the din of traffic,
riding in its worthless steel armor
against age-old, vengeful forces: beauty
flees; men follow; blood is shed for her
return; heroes die or wander. Again.

Andrew Krivak

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was short on new ideas. He hit on the idea of distributing post-card copies of Poussin's *Adoration of the Magi* to the congregation before the liturgy and then, in lieu of a traditional sermon, took the time allotted for a homily to guide the congregation through a close inspection of the painting. As a well-respected New Testament scholar possessed of an art school education, Drury was well trained for such an exercise. That sermon led to other lectures and to the beautifully produced *Painting the Word*, which was born of a lecture series on religious painting that Drury gave at London's National Gallery.

Drury argues that one should look at a great work of art with what Simone Weil, in her famous "School Studies" essay, called "attention." Attention is not brow-knitting but a serious, single-minded gaze with the expectation that one will "see" if one is attentive. The paintings to which Drury "pays attention" are almost all in the collection of the National Gallery in London. This makes the book a valuable companion for anyone fortunate enough to visit that stunning museum.

By being attentive one learns, in Drury's sympathetic reflections, how the same scene from the Gospels (which, famously, give us little background; we must fill in by the use of the imagination what Saint Ignatius would call "composition of place") can be described variously by different artists. A compelling example of such painterly exegesis occurs when Drury sets Duccio's *Annunciation* next to Fra Lippo Lippi's *Annunciation* of a century later (1450) and Poussin's seventeenth-century treatment of the same theme.

One of the most nourishing things about Drury's text is how his attention to the paintings occasions acute theological observations. In a discussion of Rembrandt's *Ecce Rex Vester* and Rubens's *Coup de Lance*, for example, Drury notes that some painters rejoice in sheer physicality. This prompts him to remind us that the long, almost metaphysical, discourses in the Gospel of John are punctuated with moments of startling physicality—think of the fear that opening the tomb of Lazarus might be a repulsively smelly event. Circumcision, hunger, scourging, crowning with thorns, being nailed to wood, are physical facts, pointing to Christ's embodiedness, and capable of being vividly imagined.

Inevitably, I suppose, Drury's work begs comparison with the enormously popular Sister Wendy Beckett, whose reflections on art have been both a television and publishing success. The approaches of the two are quite different. Sister Wendy honed her eye on a lifetime of using art reproductions as aids to her prayer life. Her comments are, like those of Drury, rooted in prayerful attention. Drury, though, is the more academically prepared of the two, but not so much so that he wanders into the purely scholarly. His comments are longer, more detailed, and intellectually more compelling. Both authors, from quite different perspectives, teach us to see as they do.

The subtitle of Matt Murray's memoir is "My Father's Journey into the Monas-

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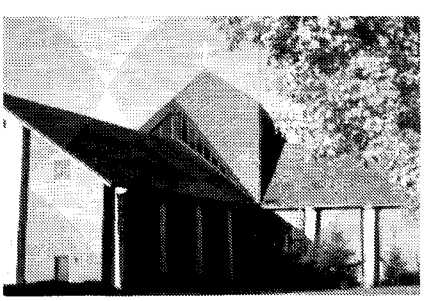

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The Father and the Son
by Matt Murray
HarperCollins, $25, 260 pp.

tic Life." Jim Murray was a successful provider and parent, who, after the untimely death of his wife from cancer, entered a small Benedictine monastery where he persevered to final vows and, in 1993, to ordination to the priesthood. At this writing, he teaches in the monastery's prep school, gives spiritual direction, and is active in the liturgical life of his community.

While the precise focus of this book is his father (now Father James), Matt Murray looks back on the life of his mother Michele (a convert from Judaism who made her name as an essayist and reviewer for the *New Republic* and the *National Catholic Reporter*, where she was also book-editor-at-a-distance, and some of the national dailies), and on her long and painful struggle with cancer. Murray also includes a retrospective account of his father's upbringing which was not, by any measure, an easy one.

Memoirs, by definition, narrate events that impinge on the life and attitudes of the chronicler. Matt Murray does not intrude overmuch into this story—it is, after all, the story of his father's life—but he does let us share his bewilderment at the suffering and death of his mother, his puzzlement as he watched his father's fitfully manic life afterward, and his somewhat bemused reaction to his father's increasing attraction to his Catholic faith, as well as his propensity toward tearful outbursts at prayer.

It is not clear if Matt Murray is himself an active churchgoer or a believer, but he is hardly dismissive of his father's faith. In fact, it is clear that he loves this man who is his father and is now an elderly monk who has found his way to the monastery. His remarks on his father's spiritual journey—how it was shaped by the Ignatian *Exercises* provided him by his spiritual director before he entered religious life—is accurately and tenderly rendered.

Murray is a fine writer with a perceptive eye for detail. The book will be of interest to anyone who loves the theme of the spiritual journey set, for once, in the context of a family.

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Robert Ver Eecke	Sacred and Liturgical Dance Study Program

At the Corner of East and Now
by Frederica Mathewes-Green
Tarcher/Putnam, $23.95, 279 pp.

A few years ago [September 12, 1997], I reviewed Mathewes-Green's book *Facing East*, which was the author's account of her conversion to Orthodoxy after a long spiritual pilgrimage. Her new volume, *At the Corner of East and Now*, is a continuation of her life story and an effort to open up the Orthodox experience to Americans. Here, Mathewes-Green, a commentator for National Public Radio and a regular columnist for the Evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*, chronicles her present life in an Orthodox parish in Maryland led by her husband. (Readers of the earlier work will recall that he was formerly a Protestant pastor.)

Mathewes-Green alternates narratives of everyday life with reflections

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on the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, that being the usual order for Sunday worship in both Orthodox and Eastern Catholic liturgies. She has chapters devoted to attempts by Orthodox monks to reach alienated youth in California; a friend who is an icon maker; her own work as a reader for the blind on a radio station; her presence in a circle of women inmates mourning their aborted babies; and a Christian rock festival. There is an absolutely wonderful chapter (the best in the book in my estimation) about shopping in thrift stores.

Along the way we learn interesting facts about the world of Orthodoxy: for instance, that a large number of younger Orthodox converts came into the church after having been active members in the popular Evangelical Campus Crusade for Christ. We also learn, of course, a good deal about the shape of the Byzantine liturgy through the eyes of a faithful member of the church.

Mathewes-Green writes that, as a recent convert, "I have a tendency to gush." Gushing is not quite the way I would put it; there is a new convert's triumphalism which lingers from her previous book: she now is in possession of Christian truth, so everyone who is not Orthodox is somewhat suspect. That attitude can be very irritating when she avers, to cite just one example, that Orthodox theologians integrate faith and learning into a perfect spiritual harmony, while Western theologians only "acquire intellectual understanding of religious theory," producing "removed deductive theological reasoning." Her genial ignorance of Western theology makes it likely that she would be astonished to learn that both historical and contemporary Western theologians are far from mere logic choppers and, further, that many of them have contributed greatly to our understanding of the ancient Fathers of both the East and the West.

If one leaves aside these patches of religious flag-waving, there is much to be learned about the Orthodox tradition from this work. If for no other reason than the sheer demographic growth of Orthodoxy in this country, both through immigration and conversion, we need to make ourselves acquainted with the Christian East. Pope John Paul II hopes to publish a martyrology commemorating all those who perished in the twentieth century for the faith. A large portion of it will contain the names of Orthodox Christians who died behind the Iron Curtain. Contemporary theological literature has been immensely enriched by Orthodox thinkers who went into exile from the East and found their home either in Paris at the seminary of Saint Sergius or abroad. About Orthodoxy, I can only echo what the deacon cries out at the Byzantine liturgy before the reading of holy Scripture: "Wisdom! Let us be attentive!" □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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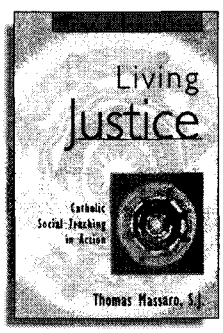

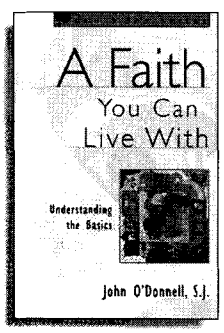

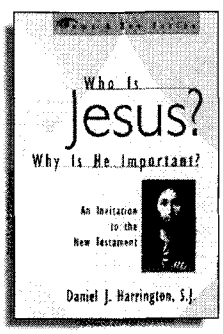

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

of Jesus Christ.

With respect to James L. Conner's fine account of efforts to support managerial dedication with moral ideals in medical care, we also need renewed versions of the great "labor schools" to instruct those who lead unions of health-care workers that just as management needs to respond to patient-oriented concerns, labor leaders need to respond to the concerns of their members for insuring more compassionate care.

JAMES F. BRESNAHAN, S.J.
Chicago, Ill.

The writer is professor emeritus of medical ethics and humanities at Northwestern University Medical School.

Are HMOs DOA?

James L. Connor, S.J. ["How to Heal Managed Care," February 25] is onto a correct diagnosis of the HMO disease when he acknowledges that health care is not a business in any traditional sense. But his prescriptions for remedying the situation assume that the ethical and moral symptoms he describes reflect a malady amenable to healing. It may be, however, that the HMO disease is more "systemic" and is in fact DOA. It may be that health care and profit-taking are ethically and morally incompatible. What we need is a universal health-care system to replace private so-called insurance programs that restrict coverage with arbitrary regulations not related to a patient's welfare. Organized religion must work to increase public support for the adequate provision and just distribution of health-care resources, for prescription drugs, long-term care, treatment of catastrophic illness, and hospice programs.

VAILE SCOTT
River Forest, Ill.

Keep 'em Catholic

Clarke E. Cochran's February 25 article on Catholic hospitals ["Another Identity Crisis"] reminded me of the special care I received at Saint Francis Hospital in Roslyn, New York. Here are two examples:

I was checking in at dawn for surgery when a Brother John greeted me: "How about this: Here's an Old Roman going to pray for an Episcopalian being operated on by a Jewish surgeon." I replied, "Here I would hope we are all one." Brother John said, "Of course we are," and I went upstairs with a lighter heart.

Another year, I was lying in a corridor waiting for an angiogram, and feeling twitchy. A young nurse walked past, then turned and started to talk. "You'll get in soon," she said. "The process isn't as bad as some may have told you.... You live in Port Washington? That's a nice town...." This sustained me through a time when I needed help. The nurse did not have to take time for me. She gave more than duty called for.

LORING W. BATTEN, III
Port Washington, N.Y.

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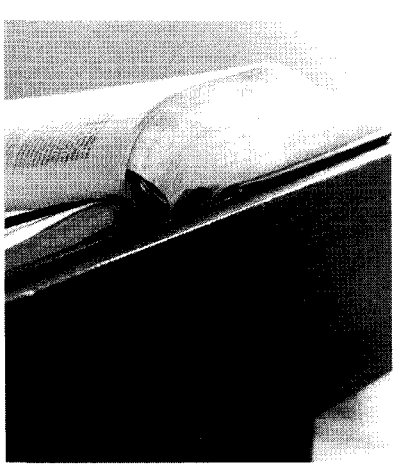

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Observe, judge, act

Thanks to John Hill and Barry Hillenbrand for their illuminating profiles of Reynold Hillenbrand [March 10]. In the summer of 1955, I climbed the antique stairs of Saint Clement's social center in Chicago in search of an 8 P.M. meeting. I was curious about a lay apostolate movement I had read about, the Young Christian Workers. On the top floor I found the room; I was late and the meeting was winding down.

A severe looking priest up front was speaking very softly, only slightly louder than a confessional whisper. The seven to ten, twenty-something males in attendance were leaning on their folding chairs as far as gravity would allow. Hearing impaired and too proud to wear a hearing aid, I could make out nothing. Then everybody rose, recited a closing prayer by heart, the priest gave us a blessing, and he quickly exited—no small talk, no chitchat.

Although my ears heard nothing of what he said, some inner sense detected that a special dynamic was operating between listeners and speaker. The body language of the listeners, the quiet intensity of the speaker, whom I learned later was Reynold Hillenbrand, would draw me back.

Later, as YCW section president, I was privileged each week to prepare the social inquiry part of the meeting (observe, judge, act) with "Monsignor" (as he was referred to by members with a combination of respect and affection), whenever weather (his suburban parish being some thirty miles distant) or his health (migraines) permitted. Those twenty-minute prep sessions, no surprise, were a means of personal formation, and I count myself among those (as John Hill said so well) "whose lives he touched." I will always be grateful for the synthesis of work and worship he gave me: my lab bench became my altar and my research the daily offering.

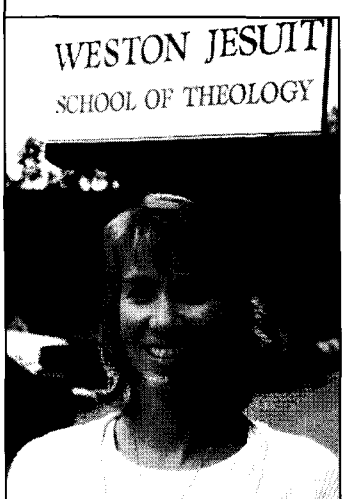
Referring to the decline of monsignor's influence and YCW participation in the 1963 lunch-counter sit-ins, Hill writes that "Hillenbrand supported the plan, though it wasn't his idea." In my experience, none of the actions that members took arising from the social inquiry—integrating all-white beaches, helping to organize retail clerks, precinct work on behalf of candidates—were ever Hillenbrand's ideas. He was always respectful of the integrity of the observe, judge, act process. He did once point out, however, that painting the rectory basement was not social action.

CHARLES FEIT
Skokie, Ill.

Holocaust ethics

Jewish scholar David Novick has reminded us of the difficulty anyone faces in drawing lessons from the Holocaust—including those drawn in Edward Gaffney's review of Harry James Cargas's *Problems Unique to the Holocaust* [March 10]. Humanity did not have to wait until the 1930s to discover painful moral dilemmas, and throwing out the rule book, especially the rules restricting the taking of human life, is about as perverse a re-

Answer the Call



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sponse to the Holocaust as I can imagine. Not to judge others is always wise counsel, but I fail to see how it squares with Cargas's protest against Pope John Paul II's meeting with Kurt Waldheim.

PHILIP E. DEVINE
Providence, R.I.

The writer is professor of philosophy at Providence College.

Pilgrim's all

Like Eamon Duffy ["Confronting the Church's Past," January 14] I am very much moved by the phrase in the third eucharistic prayer that reminds us we are a pilgrim church on earth (*ecclesia peregrinantem in terra*). How can a devotee of Chaucer feel otherwise when the liturgy recalls what the church historically is—a parade of human beings fallible and peccable?

But, to me, the censure meted out by Duffy against the pope's statement that it is the children of the church, not the church itself, that have done evil, is based on a curial concept. The church is much more than the hierarchy; it is all of us pilgrims, including popes, cardinals, archbishops, and even permanent secretaries of the curia. We are all equally children of the church, members of the Mystical Body of Christ, and all of us sinners defile that body.

The pope was expressing shame in his apology, for the offenses of the historical church are very much the offenses against Holy Mother the church, wounded as she is whenever we fail her. Let us recognize that all of us—from popes to peasants—are sinners very much in need of atonement. That is what pilgrimage is all about.

MARIAN BURKHART
New York, N.Y.

Correction ■ Because of a transcription error, the last phrase of Alvera M. Sams's letter (Correspondence, March 24) was garbled. It should have read "alcohol and drug abuse [not *use*] prevention programs." Our apologies.

THE EDITORS

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THE TALE OF JC1654

Brian Doyle

Some months ago a thin bearded man appeared in my office, propped a ladder against my wall, climbed aloft, and nailed a thin bearded man to the wall. This latter thin man, I should say, was bronze, and six inches tall; he was also wearing a bronze loincloth and a bronze circlet of thorns. The cross to which he was nailed was walnut, fifteen inches long, and seven inches wide.

The first man, having hung the second man, departed, without a word. I sat and stared at the small bronze man, and pondered, not for the first time and not for the last, his most unusual life, his cruel death, and his astonishing return—perhaps the most interesting and significant story in the long thousands of years that human beings have told stories of magic and power to each other.

But I also saw, as if for the first time, the crucifix itself, and wondered about this macabre talisman—not so much its long history as symbol (some fifteen centuries), or extraordinary artistic renditions (by such geniuses as Velázquez), or its historical inaccuracy (Christ would have been crucified naked, for greater humiliation), but as a thing made by human hands some two thousand years after the incident depicted occurred on a dark afternoon in Judea.

In short, who made the little Christ in my office, and how did he get here?

He is, I discovered, JC1654, from the Jeweled Cross Company of North Attleboro, Massachusetts, a company named for its very first product, a rhinestone-studded crucifix made at a kitchen table for a wake in 1922. The Jeweled Cross Company, which today makes more than a million religious items a year, cast JC1654 from a mold carved by its in-house sculptor; it milled the cross from walnut grown in Pennsylvania, and cast the tiny bronze sign above the corpus, INRI (*Iesus Nazaraenus Rex Iudaeorum*, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews"), the Roman insult to Jews carefully reproduced in America two thousand years later.

From Massachusetts, JC1654 was sent to a store in Oregon. This store sells church supplies and devotional products, among them some one thousand crucifixes a year of the more than a million sold annually in the United States—numbers easier to digest, perhaps, when you remember that rosaries carry tiny crucifixes, and there are crucifixes for automobile dashboards and holy water fonts, and crucifixes for key-chains, pendants, medals, sick-call sets, pyxes, processional crosses, and altars, among many other uses.

From the store on the main street of a city, JC1654 traveled north four miles, in a van, in the company of forty-nine identical JC1654s, to a carpentry shop at a small Catholic university, where the university's carpenter, a quiet man whose hobby it is to build altars, hammered the bronze corpus to the walnut cross with brass nails (this is the K model JC1654, which is designed to be assembled at the place of display). The carpenter hammered the tiny bronze INRI sign into the cross above the corpus, too.

Hammering Christ to the cross fifty times took him a long time, he says, because he was trying to be especially meticulous about his work, because walnut is a strong wood not easily pierced, because the infinitesimal brass nails (called "brads") are almighty difficult to handle, because the bronze corpus is fragile, and because the job had an altogether strange cast to it, truth be told.

From the carpenter's shop, JC1654 was carried across campus by the thin bearded man who entered my office one day without a word and hung Christ on the wall above my door. He's been here for a few months now, has JC1654, and I've developed an affection and respect for him. He traveled all the way across the country to be here, for one thing. And he rather elevates the room, which otherwise is a thick jungle of papers and books and motley visitors.

And he reminds me, every time I glance up from my desk, that once there was a man who so loved men and women and children that he let himself be beaten and scourged and stabbed and broken, and let himself be nailed to a massive cross with massive nails, and let himself be killed, slowly and with unimaginable pain, so that people he never knew would have the chance to live in the unimaginable love of the Creator of everything we know.

And he reminds me too, every time I look up and catch the dull bronze glint of his sagging body, of all the millions of men and women and children who have given their bodies and lives for others, and give their bodies and lives now, right this minute, so many of them silent in their struggles and never to be celebrated or sainted after their difficult lives and obscure deaths.

None is Christ but all are Christ-like; and that, finally, is why I bear such affection and respect for JC1654, for he reminds me to love, and there is no greater law, nor more difficult work, nor deeper joy. So said the mysterious man depicted on my wall—and I believe him. □

Brian Doyle *is the editor of* Portland Magazine *at the University of Portland. He is the author of* Credo, *a collection of essays, and—with his father, Jim Doyle—of* Two Voices, *a collection of their essays.*

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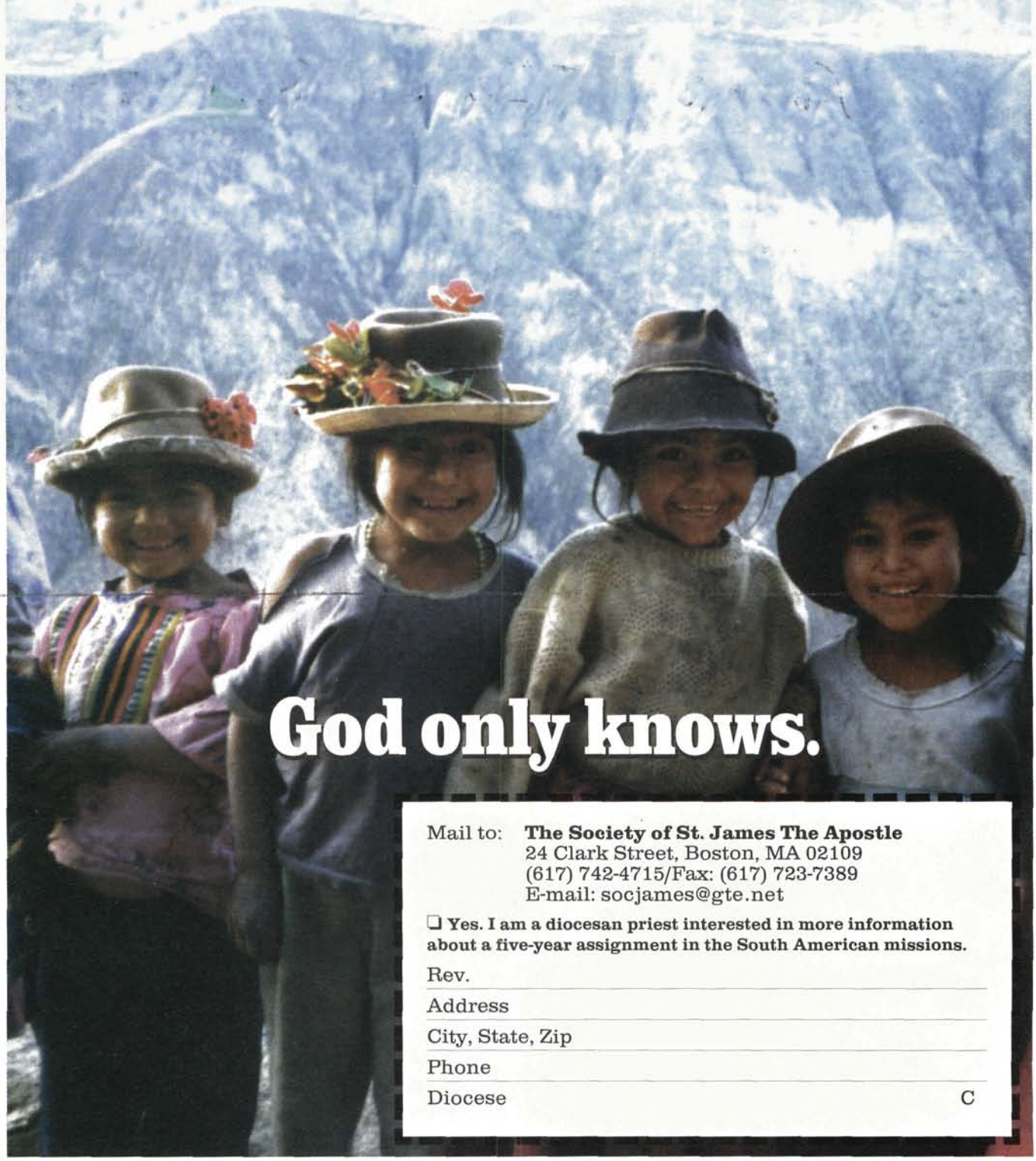

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